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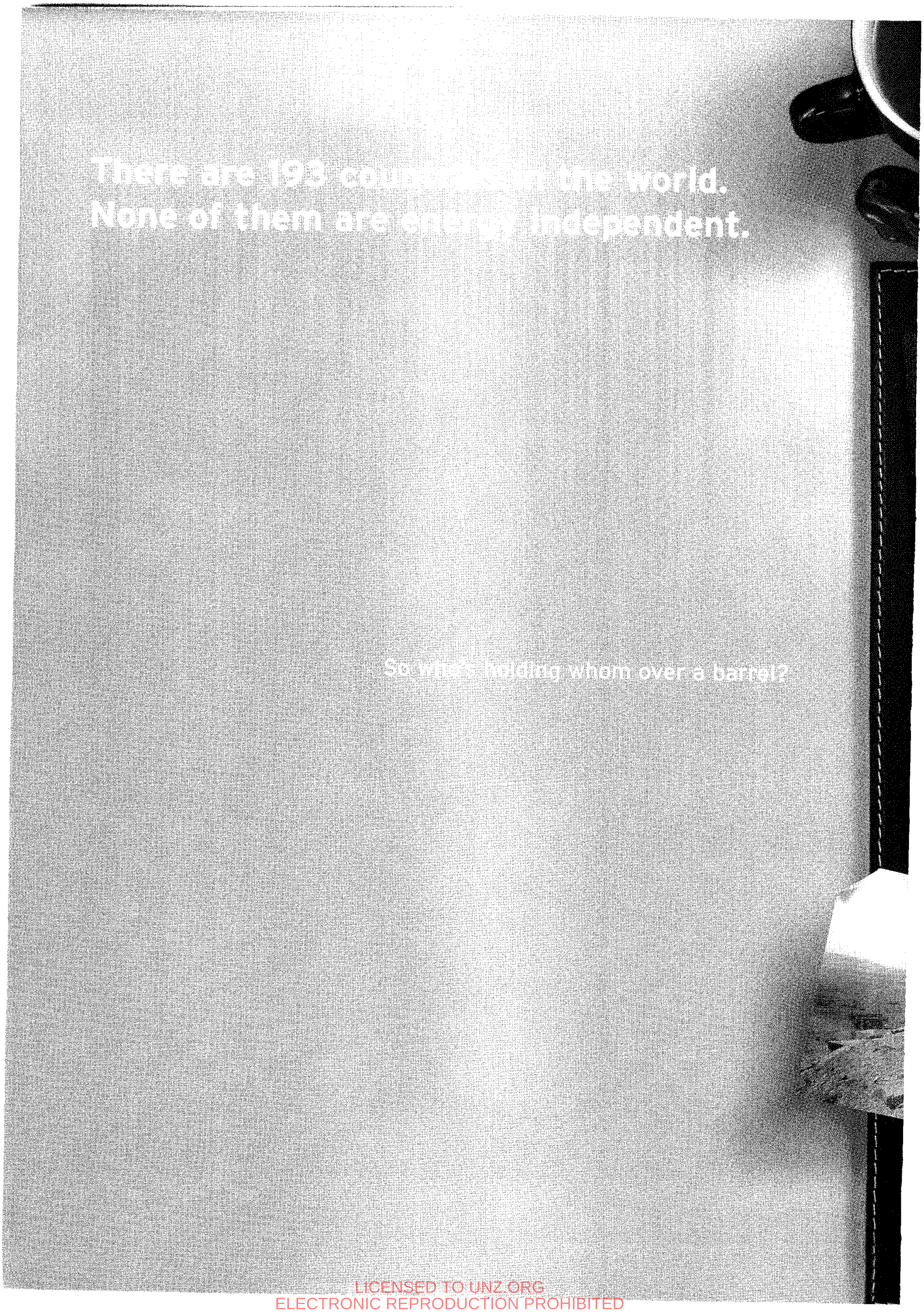
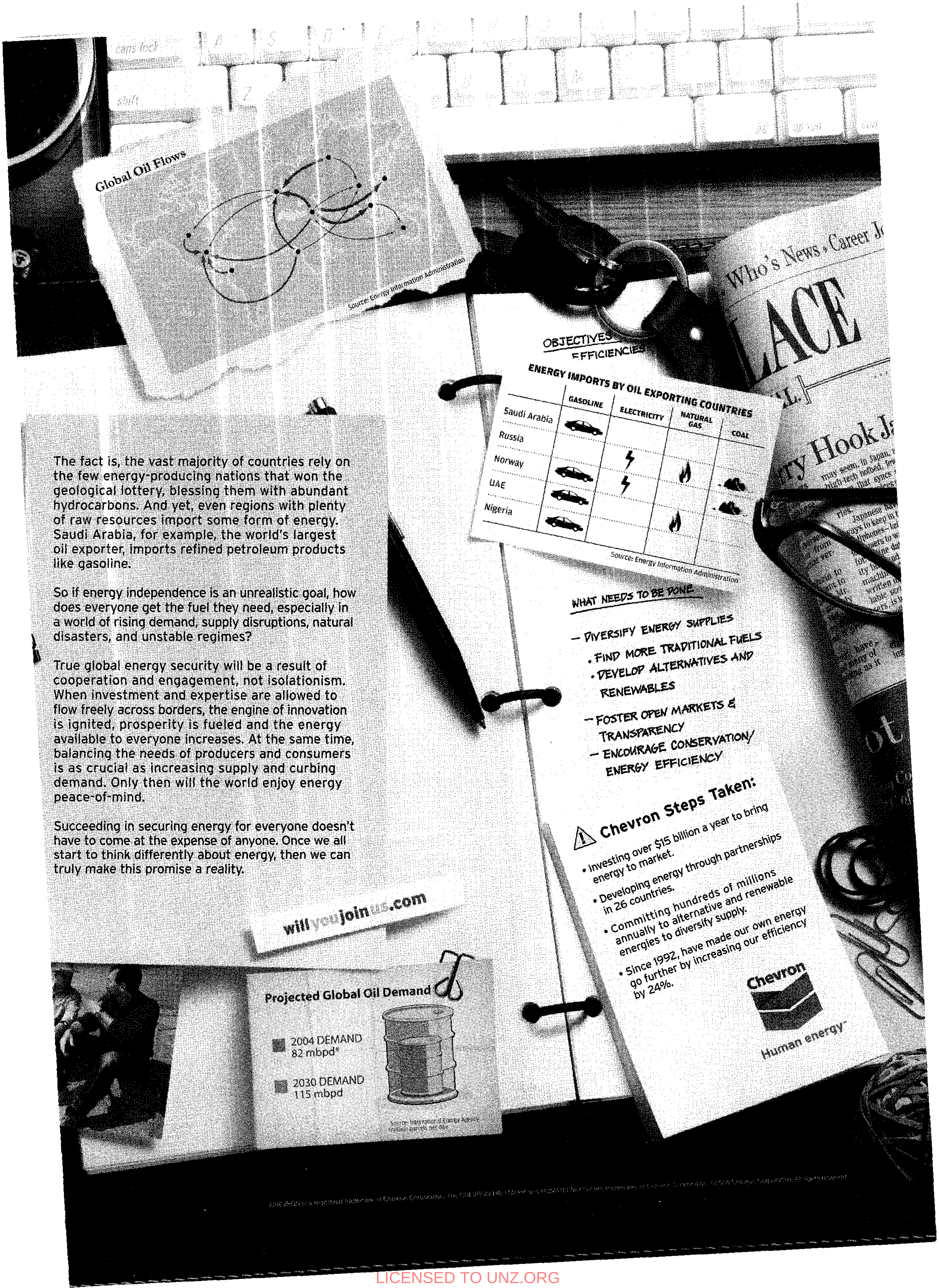

There are 193 countries in the world.
None of them are energy independent.
So who's holding whom over a barrel?


Global Oil Flows
Source: Energy Information Administration
Projected Global Oil Demand
▨ 2004 DEMAND 82 mbpd*
▨ 2030 DEMAND 115 mbpd
Source: International Energy Agency
*million barrels per day

The fact is, the vast majority of countries rely on the few energy-producing nations that won the geological lottery, blessing them with abundant hydrocarbons. And yet, even regions with plenty of raw resources import some form of energy. Saudi Arabia, for example, the world's largest oil exporter, imports refined petroleum products like gasoline.

So if energy independence is an unrealistic goal, how does everyone get the fuel they need, especially in a world of rising demand, supply disruptions, natural disasters, and unstable regimes?

True global energy security will be a result of cooperation and engagement, not isolationism. When investment and expertise are allowed to flow freely across borders, the engine of innovation is ignited, prosperity is fueled and the energy available to everyone increases. At the same time, balancing the needs of producers and consumers is as crucial as increasing supply and curbing demand. Only then will the world enjoy energy peace-of-mind.

Succeeding in securing energy for everyone doesn't have to come at the expense of anyone. Once we all start to think differently about energy, then we can truly make this promise a reality.

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OBJECTIVES
EFFICIENCIES

ENERGY IMPORTS BY OIL EXPORTING COUNTRIES

	GASOLINE	ELECTRICITY	NATURAL GAS	COAL
Saudi Arabia	🚗			
Russia		⚡	🔥	●
Norway	🚗	⚡		●
UAE	🚗		🔥	
Nigeria	🚗			

Source: Energy Information Administration

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE

— DIVERSIFY ENERGY SUPPLIES
  • FIND MORE TRADITIONAL FUELS
  • DEVELOP ALTERNATIVES AND RENEWABLES
— FOSTER OPEN MARKETS & TRANSPARENCY
— ENCOURAGE CONSERVATION/ ENERGY EFFICIENCY

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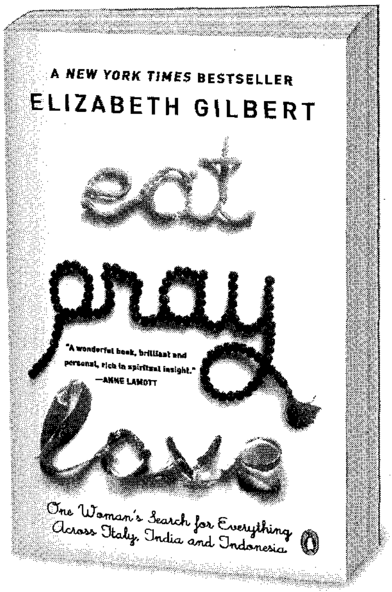
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—The New York Times Book Review

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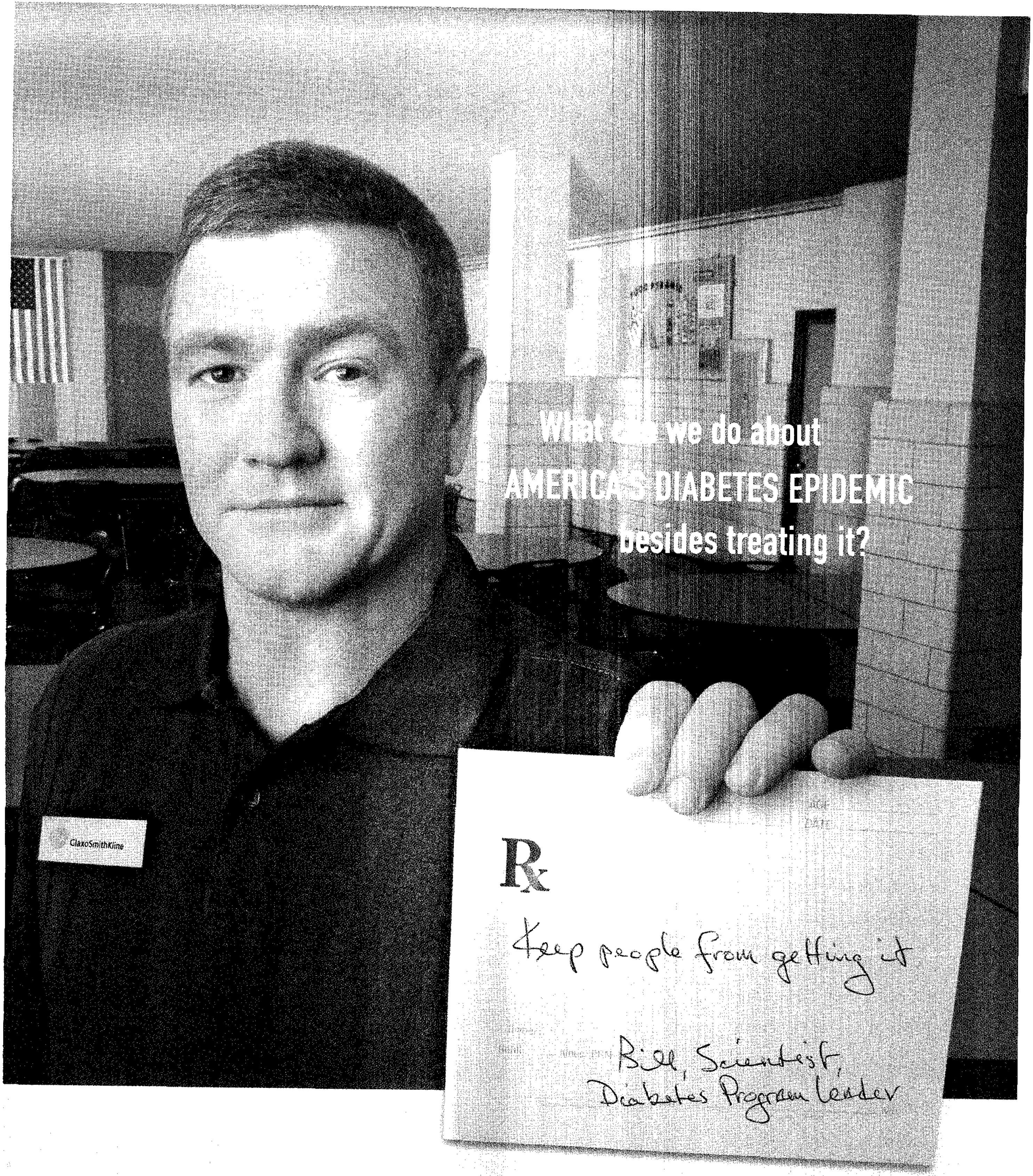
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THIS WEEK:

Ann Goldstein on translating Primo Levi.

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A decade's worth of New Yorker Film Notes.

EVENTS

A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Goldberg ("The Lorax," p. 32), the magazine's Washington correspondent, recently published "Prisoners: A Muslim and a Jew Across the Middle East Divide."

Elizabeth Kolbert (Comment, p. 27) writes frequently about the environment. Her book "Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change," about global warming, is out in paperback.

John Lahr ("Disappearing Act," p. 38) is the author of "Honky Tonk Parade: *New Yorker* Profiles of Show People."

Adam Gopnik (The Talk of the Town, p. 31; Books, p. 82) has published three books, including "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York."

James Richardson (Poem, p. 65) is the author of six books of poems, including "Vectors: Aphorisms and Ten-Second Essays" and "Interglacial: New and Selected Poems and Aphorisms."

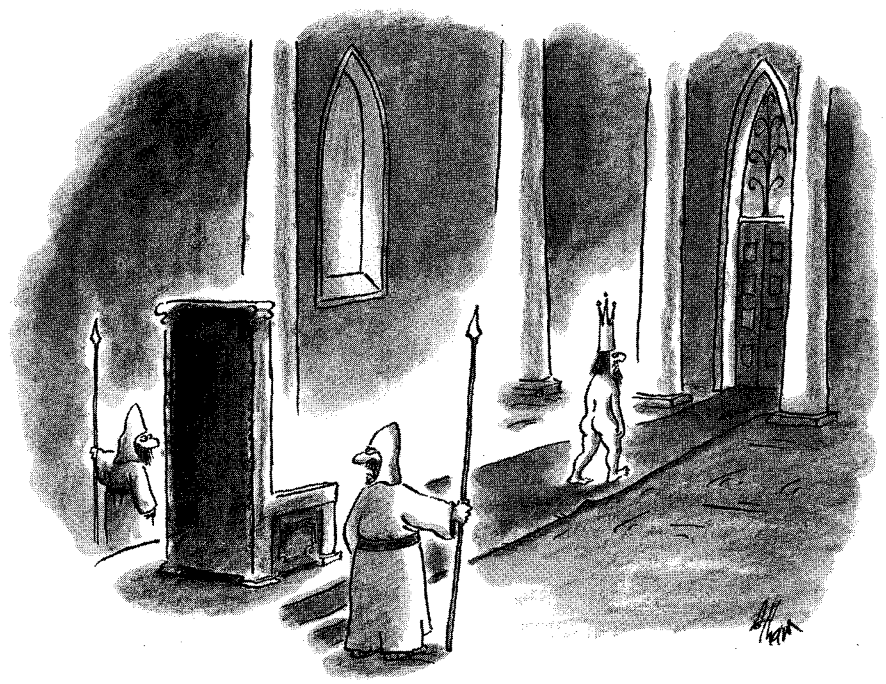
Ken Auletta ("The Fixer," p. 46) writes the magazine's Annals of Communications. He is the author of, most recently, "Backstory: Inside the Business of News."

Larissa MacFarquhar ("Two Heads," p. 58) is a staff writer.

R. & Aline Crumb (Comic Strip, p. 70) have been working together for thirty-five years. Aline Crumb is the author of "Need More Love," to be published later this month.

Primo Levi (Fiction, p. 72), who died in 1987, wrote fiction, poetry, and memoirs, including "Survival in Auschwitz." A book of previously untranslated stories, "A Tranquil Star," will be published in April. This story originally appeared in Italian in 1978.

Jonathan Rosen (A Critic at Large, p. 76) is the editorial director of Nextbook. He will publish "The Life of the Skies," a book about bird-watching, next year. ♦



"There are enormous challenges facing this country."

THE MAIL

SAVING ENERGY

Elizabeth Kolbert, in her article on Amory Lovins and his ideas for environmental efficiency, writes that the largest contribution to "the drop in oil use in the early nineteen-eighties . . . was increased fuel efficiency . . . led by the creation of federal auto efficiency standards in 1975" ("Mr. Green," January 22nd). Although oil consumption per vehicle did decrease, the primary factor in the overall drop was that high fuel prices motivated people to drive less. After all, cars don't use fuel, people do. Market incentives, like an increased tax on gasoline, would be more effective than relatively slow-acting efficiency standards.
Bill Kennedy
Ann Arbor, Mich.

Lovins, in studying inefficiently designed electric wiring in office structures, argues that doubling the wire diameter would significantly reduce losses due to the resistance of the copper conductor. While this is true, there are two other things worth mentioning. First, as Lovins states, doubling the diameter would quadruple the volume and thus the weight of the copper used. In many cases, this thicker wire would require years of steady use for the savings to pay back the owner for the increased cost of the copper, a financial hurdle too steep for most corporations. Perhaps more important, where would all this material come from, and at what cost to the population and to the environment?
Steven E. Schumer
Sunnyvale, Calif.

Kolbert makes a mathematical error when she states that U.S. total annual energy expenditures, or what she says is roughly a tenth of our gross domestic product, amount to more than a quadrillion (a thousand trillion) dollars. Since our actual G.D.P. is thirteen trillion dollars, this is overstating our energy expenditures a thousandfold. A quadrillion is more than twenty-one times the world's output, of 46.6 trillion dollars, and to reach to this figure we'd need a period of hyperinflation. This is not impossible; after the Second World War, hyperinflation reduced the value of all the Hungarian currency in circulation to one-thousandth of one U.S. cent.
Stephen Highcock
Pennington, N.J.

IN THE ORIGINAL

Milan Kundera, in his musings on European writing, is right to bemoan anthologies that merely juxtapose national literatures ("Die Weltliteratur," January 8th). But I take issue with his claim that a "national context" or perspective is incapable of articulating a novel's aesthetic value (which he defines as the novelty of form) and that you can "judge" a novel without knowledge of its original language. Readers can make insightful comments about a translated text, but that does not mean that they can do a probing analysis of the work's style, rhetoric, intertextual references, and form. It is a virtue—indeed, a necessity—to learn multiple languages, in order to understand the particularities of other cultures and their literary traditions. Otherwise, all literature will eventually be written in or translated into English, perpetuating the imperial status the language enjoys today. Goethe, who coined the term "Weltliteratur," read Latin, Italian, French, and English.
Domna C. Stanton
Distinguished Professor of French
City University of New York
New York City

CORRECTION: James Surowiecki's Financial Page on January 22nd stated that Kenneth Langone was on the G.E. board's compensation committee that approved a generous retirement package for Jack Welch in 1996; in fact, Langone did not join G.E.'s board until 1999.

•

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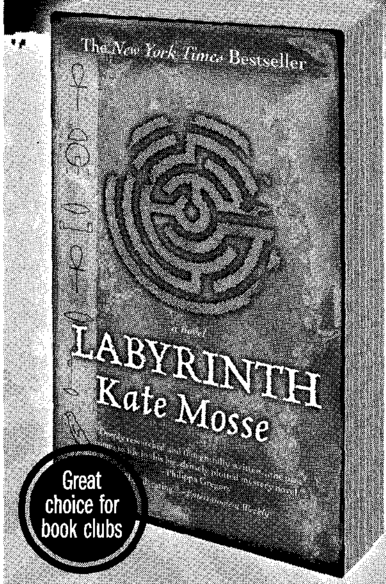

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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11	12	13	7	8	9	10

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
ALL QUIET

R. C. Sherriff's 1928 drama, "Journey's End," set in the trenches of the First World War, enjoyed a successful revival in London in 2004. Now the play is coming to Broadway, starring Hugh Dancy, Boyd Gaines, Jefferson Mays, and Stark Sands. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
WORTH A MENTION

The Plug Awards, at Irving Plaza, honor independent musicians: Silversun Pickups, Stephen Malkmus and the Jicks, El-P, and others will perform. (See page 10.)

ART
FAMILY FILM

The personal resonance of the family snapshot is exploded in "Family Pictures," at the Guggenheim. Artists include Sally Mann, Loretta Lux, Gregory Crewdson, and Catherine Opie. (See page 12.)

DANCE
THERE AND BACK

Karole Armitage presents her second New York season of contemporary ballet since her return from fifteen years in Europe. On the program is her newest work, "Ligeti Essays," a meditation on time and memory set to the music of György Ligeti. (See page 14.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
PUSHKIN ONSTAGE

The role of Tatiana in Tchaikovsky's "Eugene Onegin" is one of Renée Fleming's favorites, but this is her first chance to sing it at the Met. Dmitri Hvorostovsky and Ramón Vargas join her in a revival of Robert Carsen's spare and effective production, conducted by Valery Gergiev. (See page 16.)

MOVIES
THE BEAT GOES ON

Wallace Berman, a New York-born and California-raised Renaissance man of the Beat and Pop-art scenes, made only one film, the legendary "Aleph," which will be shown at Anthology Film Archives with live musical accompaniment by John Zorn. The screening is part of a series devoted to Berman, who died in 1976, that also includes other works with which he was involved. (See page 22.)

Backstage at Christopher Durang's new musical, "Adrift in Macao." Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

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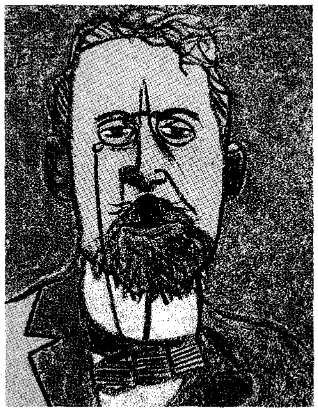
CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
ANTON REBORN

Last week in London, the usually sedate English press was doing cartwheels over Ian Rickson's revival of "The Seagull" at the Royal Court, which is generally considered the finest British production of Chekhov in recent memory.



RICHARD MERKIN

Of its many pleasures—a pitch-perfect cast, a minimal, samovar-free set, elegant staging—the most piquant is the clarity and psychological cunning of Christopher Hampton's adaptation. Hampton, who made his début at the Royal Court in the sixties, brings Chekhov's tragicomic vision of human self-destructiveness into bold relief. His adaptation excavates the unwitting deadliness in all the characters, revealing underneath their palaver a battlefield of unconscious aggression. The iconic seagull that is shot on a whim by Konstantin and laid at the feet of his beloved Nina, a would-be actress, subsequently becomes, in her mind, a symbol of her failed life. Here, however, Hampton's limpid adaptation allows us to see that the metaphor is more far-reaching than the caprice of destiny.

—John Lahr

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

ADRIFT IN MACAO
Primary Stages presents a musical parody of film noir, with a book and lyrics by the seasoned absurdist Christopher Durang and music by Peter Melnick. Sheryl Kaller directs. In previews. Opens Feb. 13. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART THREE: SALVAGE
The final installment of Tom Stoppard's tripartite Russian epic. In previews. (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200.)

FOLLIES
Encores! begins its season with a concert staging of Stephen Sondheim's 1971 musical. The cast includes Victoria Clark, Christine Baranski, and Donna Murphy. Feb. 8-12. (City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 212-581-1212.)

THE FRUGAL REPAST
Ron Hirsen's play, directed by Joe Grifasi, is about two Parisian clowns who steal a Picasso print after discovering that they are its subjects. Opens Feb. 7. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444.)

HOWARD KATZ
Patrick Marber's dark comedy stars Alfred Molina as a high-powered talent agent whose life is falling apart. Doug Hughes directs. In previews. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

IN THE HEIGHTS
The ethnic mix of Washington Heights is the focus of this new musical, with music and lyrics by Lin-Manuel Miranda and a book by Quiara Alegría Hudes. In previews. Opens Feb. 8. (37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100.)

THE JADED ASSASSIN
The return of Michael Voyer's martial-arts fable, which premièred at the Ice Factory Festival. Timothy Haskell directs. Previews begin Feb. 8. Opens Feb. 10. (Ohio, 66 Wooster St. 212-868-4444.)

JOURNEY'S END
Hugh Dancy stars in a revival of R. C. Sherriff's 1928 drama, based on his experiences in the trenches of the First World War. Previews begin Feb. 8. (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

KING LEAR
Kevin Kline assumes the title role in James Lapine's production, which has an original score by Stephen Sondheim and Michael Starobin. Previews begin Feb. 9. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 212-967-7555.)

THE LAST WORD . . .
In this drama by Oren Safdie, Daniel J. Travanti plays a Holocaust survivor who enlists a headstrong N.Y.U. student as his writing assistant. In previews. Opens Feb. 8. (Theatre at St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 212-279-4200.)

LOOKINGGLASS ALICE
The Chicago-based Lookingglass Theatre Company uses juggling, acrobatics, and other circus feats in its staging of the Lewis Carroll classic. Opens Feb. 9. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

THE MADRAS HOUSE
The Mint Theatre Company revives Harley Granville-Barker's comedy from 1909, not seen in New York since 1921. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

MARAT/SADE
Peter Weiss's haunting play within a play is the second entry in the Classical Theatre of Harlem's season. Directed by Christopher McElroen. In previews. (H.S.A. Theatre, 645 St. Nicholas Ave. 212-868-4444.)

MARY ROSE
A revival of J. M. Barrie's classic romantic drama, about a girl who may be a ghost. Tina Landau directs. In previews. (Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-353-0303.)

NELSON
Partial Comfort stages a new play by Sam Marks, about a cameraman leading a double life. Previews begin Feb. 7. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

THE SECRET OF MME. BONNARD'S BATH
In Israel Horovitz's play, presented by New York Playwrights Lab, two art students discover the hidden story behind a painting by Pierre Bonnard. In previews. Opens Feb. 8. (Kirk, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

SYNESTHESIA
This cross-genre performance piece by Electric Pear is the culmination of a five-month game of "artistic telephone" that links artists from nine different disciplines. Feb. 7-10. (Harris Lieberman Gallery, 89 Vandam St. 212-279-4200.)

A VERY COMMON PROCEDURE
MCC Theatre presents a play by Courtney Baron, about an affair between a married woman and her infant's doctor. Michael Greif directs. In previews. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 212-279-4200.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSOLUTE CLARITY
Sophia Romma transfers a 1977 play by Edvard Radzinsky from its original Russian setting to the present-day Lower East Side. (Players Theatre, 115 Macdougal St. 212-352-3101.)

ALL THAT I WILL EVER BE
The world première of a new play by Alan Ball ("Six Feet Under"), about the relationship between a Los Angeles native and a Middle Eastern immigrant. Directed by Jo Bonney. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

ANON
Kate Robin's dark comedy is about a man who enters a dysfunctional relationship with his cat's therapist. (Atlantic Stage 2, at 330 W. 16th St. 212-239-6200.)

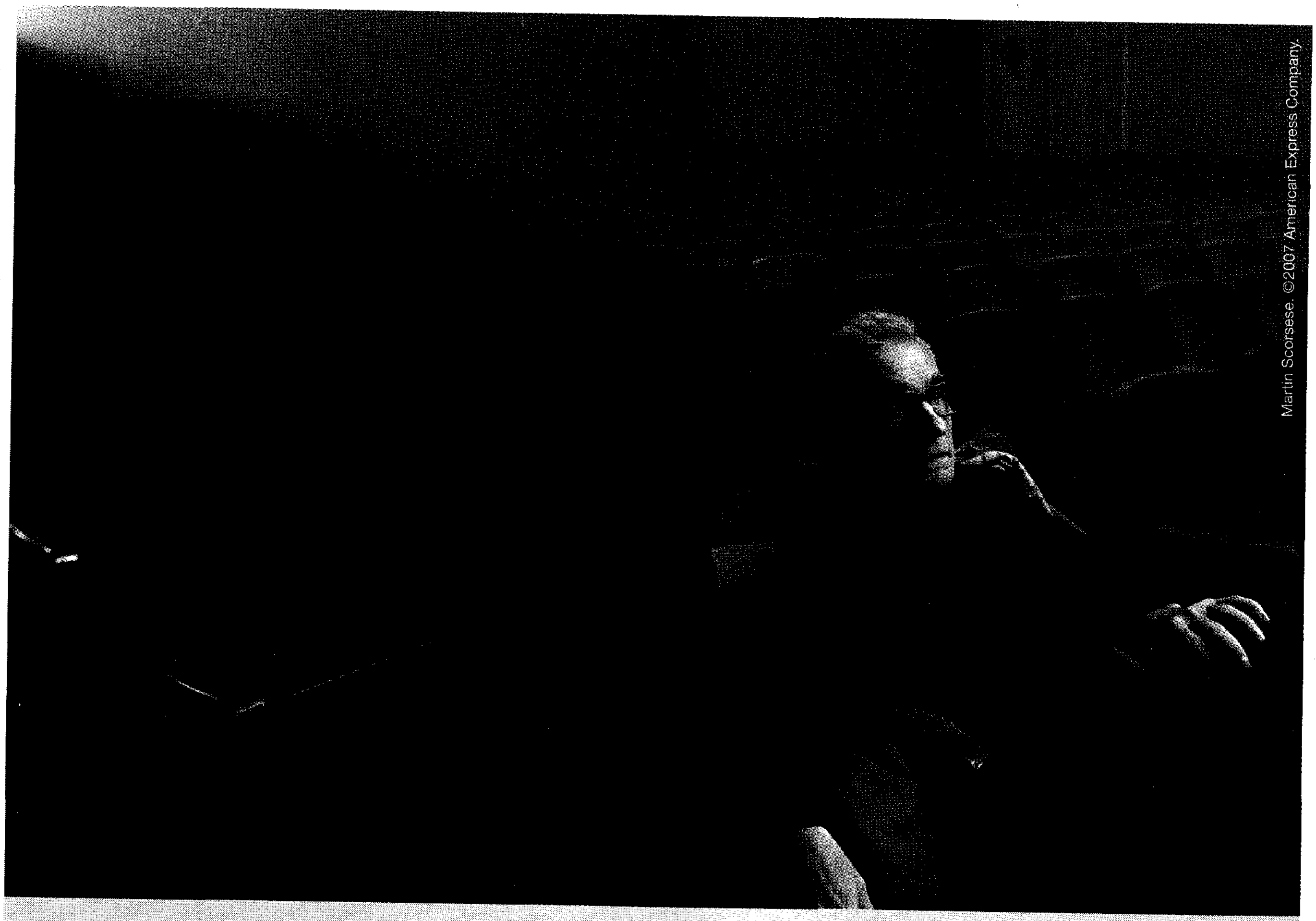
DUTCHMAN
Amiri Baraka's drama receives a thrilling revival at the Cherry Lane, where it first opened in 1964 and created a sensation. Jennifer Mudge plays Lula, a white woman who cannot resist the desire that she inspires in Clay (Dulé Hill), a handsome black man she meets in a subway car. Mudge's performance is so profound an evocation of worldly disgust that one feels as if Hill were there merely to feed her the lines. Whether she's eating an apple or taunting Clay or mocking his aspirations with bile and knowing, Mudge tears into Baraka's blight, into the poetry he finds in the nightmare of being. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/5/07.) (38 Commerce St. 212-989-2020.)

THE FEVER
Wallace Shawn plays a man of privilege who is forced to confront the poverty of the Third World, in the New Group's revival of his one-person drama. Scott Elliott directs. (Acorn, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

FRANK'S HOME
Richard Nelson's conflicted new play tries to encapsulate Frank Lloyd Wright's complex genius, but it keeps getting bogged down in hackneyed family drama. When the down-on-his-luck, fifty-five-year-old Wright comes to Hollywood in 1923 to design a school, he's reunited with his estranged son and daughter, who are alternately awed and outraged by his spectacular vanity. Nelson's characters are conceived as a set of historical paper dolls, forced into a series of contrived, country-house-like scenes; only Robert Falls's energetic direction and a vigorous performance by Peter Weller as Wright prevent the stilted dialogue from flatlining. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

GONE
The collagist-playwright Charles L. Mee, Jr., draws on texts by Proust and Ginsberg for his new movement-theatre piece. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through Feb. 11.)

THE JEW OF MALTA / THE MERCHANT OF VENICE
Theatre for a New Audience presents Christopher Marlowe's play and its Shakespearean coun-



Martin Scorsese. ©2007 American Express Company.

My name .... MARTIN SCORSESE ....

childhood ambition .... To get out of where I was ....

fondest memory My PARENTS at The premiere of "MEAN STREETS" 1973

indulgence .... CloTHES ....

last purchase .... 12 pair of Socks From Rome, Italy ....

favorite movie .... They are Legion ....

inspiration .... Other Filmmakers ....

My life .... STill WORKING ON IT ....

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terpart in repertory, with F. Murray Abraham as their respective Jewish villains, Barabas and Shylock. (Duke, 229 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

ONCE THERE WAS A VILLAGE
Sailing across four hundred years of East Village history with upside-down ironing boards as their vessels, the actors of the Czechoslovak-American Marionette Theatre land in a place that's all their own: a folksy, pack-rat surrealist realm of talking suitcases, waltzing mops, and an enormous scaffolding that—with imagination—becomes a teeming tenement. The show takes its time finding its groove, digressing through the Dutch Colonial era before settling, happily, on the furrowed brow of Yuri Kapralov, street artist, madman, and sage of East Sixth Street (played with charisma by Vit Horejs, the show's director). Kapralov, a North Caucasian refugee, helped invent the found-object idiom that Horejs celebrates here, using an array of dramatic vignettes, animated props, and percussive songs. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Through Feb. 11.)

A SPANISH PLAY
Under the painterly direction of John Turturro, an expert cast (including Zoe Caldwell, Denis O'Hare, and Linda Emond) hacks through the lovely verbal thickets with which Yasmina Reza ("Art") has constructed her new drama, an ensemble meditation on illusion and longing. A group of actors are rehearsing what they refer to as "a Spanish play," about a mother's late-in-life romance and the rivalry between her two daughters—actresses of differing degrees of success, one of whom is rehearsing "a Bulgarian play." Gliding from one plane to the next, each member of this meta-meta-story is refracted through a series of wistful prisms, stepping out of character between scenes to describe, in lyrical solo passages, the kind of emotional quantum physics that governs the lives of actors. (Classic Stage, 136 E. 13th St. 212-352-3101.)

TRANSLATIONS
Brian Friel's 1980 play, about English cartographers and servicemen visiting a small Irish-speaking community in County Donegal twelve years before the Great Famine, is a study in difference. Here, love inevitably blooms between an English lieutenant (the lovely Chandler Williams) and a local lass (the indomitable and beautiful Susan Lynch) who do not speak the same language but try to bridge their lack of verbal communication with the gestures of romance's lingua franca: kissing, caressing, while looking at the moon. One listens to Friel's melodious dialogue less for its dramatic credibility than to bathe in his ultimately sentimental view of the world, which is not always a bad thing: Friel, simply, is a stranger to irony. (Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

Karole Armitage's new piece, "Ligeti Essays," at the Joyce Theatre.

CASS BIRD

Also Playing

THE APPLE TREE: Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **A CHORUS LINE:** Schoenfeld, 236 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART ONE: VOYAGE:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **THE COAST OF UTOPIA, PART TWO: SHIPWRECK:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **COMPANY:** Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. **GREY GARDENS:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **GUTENBERG! THE MUSICAL!:** The Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 212-239-6200. **THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED:** Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **MARY POPPINS:** New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4747. **THE SCENE:** Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422. Through Feb. 11. **SPRING AWAKENING:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **TOYS IN THE ATTIC:** Pearl, 80 St. Marks Pl. 212-598-9802. **THE VERTICAL HOUR:** Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE VOYSEY INHERITANCE:** Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Feb. 7: The **Cherryholmes.** This family of bluegrass musicians plays some three hundred nights a year, which may explain how they have ended up at Lincoln Center (and with a Grammy nomination to boot) after only a few years on the scene. Feb. 8: The spooky Southwestern sounds of **Calexico.** (Allen Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500. See also Jazz and Standards.)

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Feb. 8: **Joss Stone,** the precocious English soul phenom (she put out her first album, "The Soul Sessions," four years ago, at the age of sixteen), previews songs from her third album, "Introducing Joss Stone." Feb. 9: The Denton, Texas, indie-rock group **Midlake** has moved from psychedelia à la the Flaming Lips to sweet harmonies and a seventies sound familiar to fans of America and Neil Young. Feb. 12: Australia's **Silverchair** was a huge success upon its arrival here, in the mid-nineties. The band members were in their teens, and their music paired the anthemic touch of Pearl Jam with the more aggressive edge of Nirvana. Over the ensuing years, the band has matured and largely shed what many considered their derivative sound. A new album, "Young Modern," is expected shortly.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—The Plug Awards, a relative newcomer to the universe of music-industry accolades, has a populist bent (fans vote online). On Feb. 10, it celebrates its winners and nominees with performances by **Stephen Malkmus and the Jicks,** the **Silversun Pickups, El-P, Deerhoof,** and others.

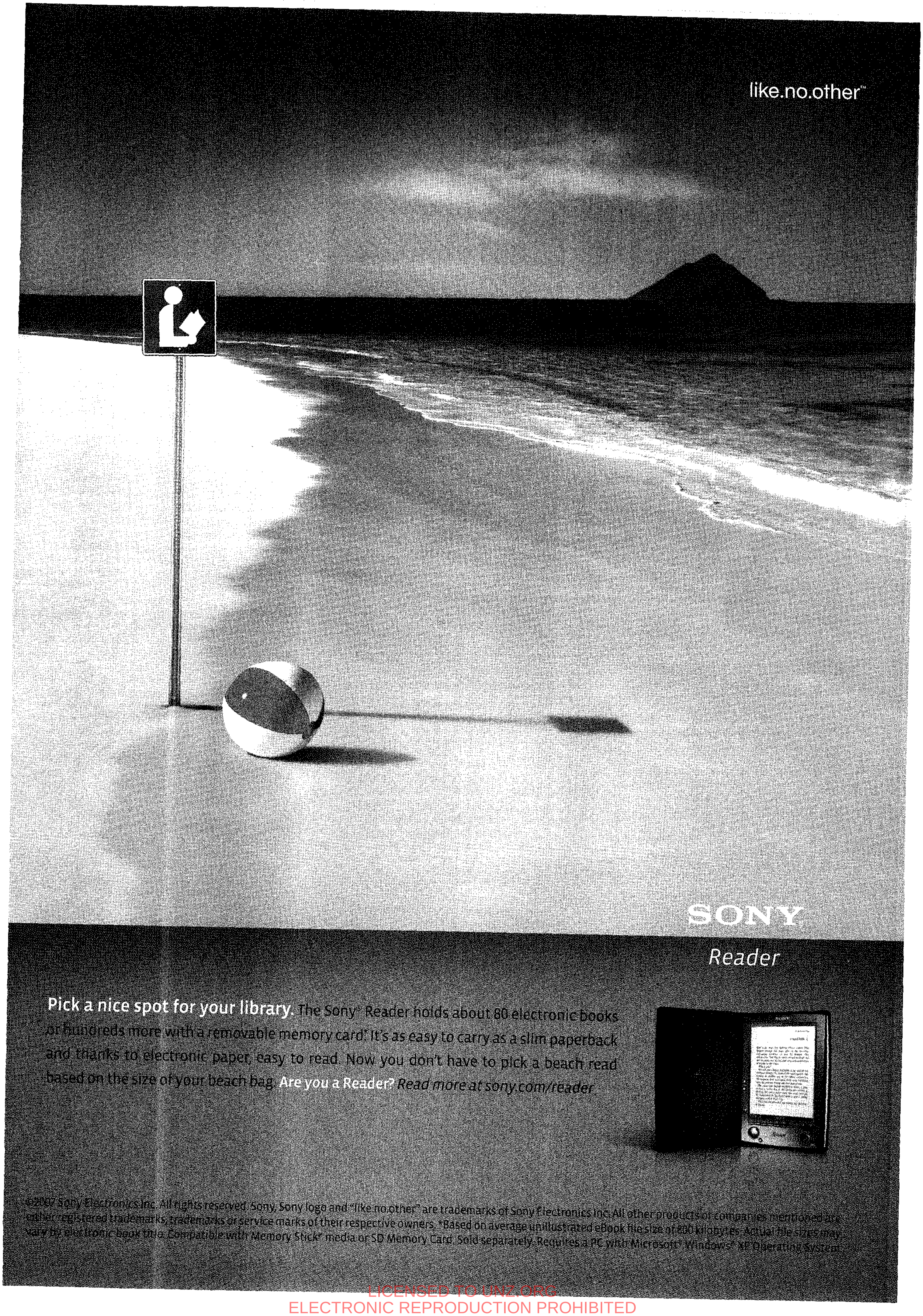
JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 7: The **Wood Brothers** are Chris, the bass player from Medeski Martin & Wood, and Oliver, a guitar-toting Southern rocker. Together they strum, pick, and sing their way through the backcountry. With the singer-songwriter **Piers Faccini.** An Englishman who grew up in France and still lives there, Faccini favors the global approach to the blues popularized by the likes of Jack Johnson and Ben Harper. Feb. 8: **Vieux Farka Touré.** The son of the Malian superstar Ali Farka Touré, Vieux follows in his father's footsteps, playing a fierce African blues guitar. Feb. 10: The Irish rocker **Pierce Turner.**

KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (212-219-3055)—Feb. 9: The eye-patch-wearing rap veteran **Slick Rick** was born in England, but he made his name in the Bronx in the early eighties. His 1988 Def Jam début album, "The Great Adventures of Slick Rick," established his reputation as one of hip-hop's most influential and distinctive voices; his troublesome attitude toward women and his embrace of material goods may have been copied, but his accent and lyrical sense remain his own. After the release of his first album, he was convicted of attempted murder, for shooting his cousin. He spent five years in jail, and then, in 1999, delivered a comeback album, "The Art of Storytelling," featuring Outkast and Snoop Dogg. In 2002, he was almost deported by the I.N.S., which detained him during a post-9/11 crackdown on noncitizen felons. He spent almost a year and a half in detention before he was released. He remains in legal jeopardy, though, as the government continues to seek his deportation.

"LET'S ZYDECO"
Feb. 11: The concert series dedicated to the various indigenous musical forms of Louisiana throws an early Mardi Gras party with **Steve Riley and the Mamou Playboys.** Growing up in the little town of Mamou, Riley played accordion in the band of the legendary fiddler Dewey Balfa. Since forming his own band, he has become a tireless ambassador of Cajun culture. (Connolly's, 121 W. 45th St. For more information, call 212-685-7597 or visit www.letszydeco.com.)

MADISON SQUARE GARDEN
Seventh Ave. at 33rd St. (212-307-7171)—Feb. 7: A thorn in the side of those who believed that the boy-band phenomenon wouldn't yield anything of worth, the pop juggernaut **Justin Timberlake** has moved beyond the ranks of his jumpsuit-wearing former peers and achieved bona-fide superstardom. Though much of the appeal of his popular recent solo album, "FutureSex/LoveSounds," comes via the hip-hop producer Timbaland, credit must be given where credit is due. With **Pink.**

NOKIA THEATRE TIMES SQUARE
Broadway at 44th St. (212-307-7171)—Feb. 11: **Hinder,** hailing from Oklahoma City, specializes in a tried-and-true brand of sophomoric guitar rock reminiscent of the likes of Creed and Nickelback. The band takes its frat-guy rabble-rousing right to the bank: its début album, "Extreme Be-



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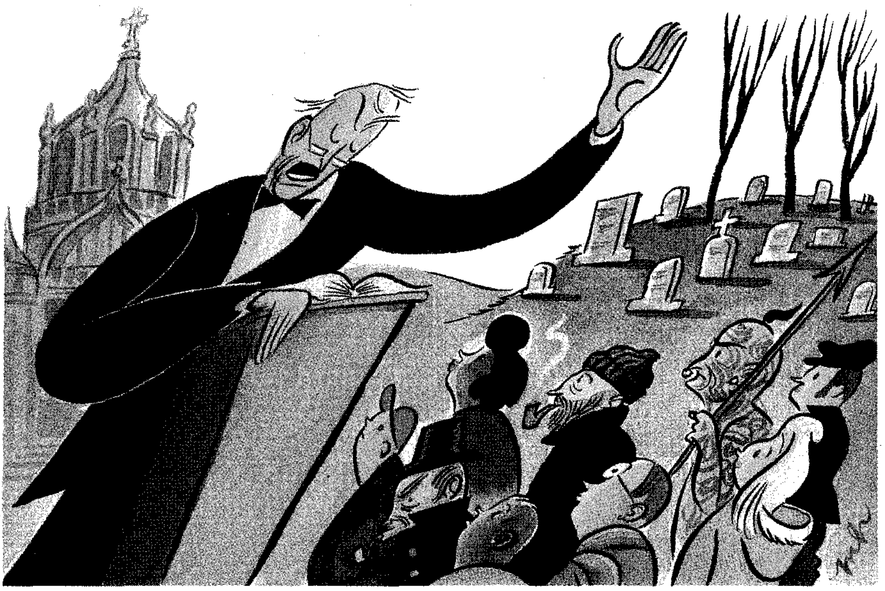
havior," continues to sell by the bucketload. With the hard-rocking **Finger Eleven** and **Black Stone Cherry.**

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Feb. 10: **Vetiver.** Led by the songwriter Andy Cabic, an associate of the freak-folk avatar Devendra Banhart, this San Francisco band traffics in acoustic music that feels centuries old. The group is touring with the British folksinger and guitarist **Vashti Bunyan,** a veteran of the sixties folk scene (her first single was written by Keith Richards and Mick Jagger) who dropped out of the business after just one album. Recently, though, inspired by the faith of a younger generation, she returned to music.



"Moby-Dick: The Sermon," at Green-Wood Cemetery (see Above and Beyond).

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Feb. 13: **Silverchair** (see the Bowery Ballroom).

WORLD MUSIC INSTITUTE
Feb. 9: The South African guitarist **Shiyani Ngcobo,** a master of the urban Zulu folk music known as *maskanda.* (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall.) Feb. 10: The Flamenco Festival New York continues with a performance by the noted Spanish guitarist **Paco de Lucía.** (Carnegie Hall.) Feb. 11: Transcendent polyphonic chanting from Tibet with the **Gyoto Monks.** (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. For more information about all the shows, call 212-545-7536.)

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Feb. 10: **Maude Maggart,** the sister of the pop star Fiona Apple, is carving out her own niche as a sultry and sweet-voiced cabaret artist.

"AMERICAN SONGBOOK"
Feb. 9: **Jason Robert Brown,** a Broadway composer who won a Tony in 1999 for his score to "Parade." Feb. 10: The musical-theatre treasure **Betty Buckley.** (Allen Room, Jazz at Lincoln Center, Broadway at 60th St. 212-721-6500.)

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Feb. 7-10: Calling **John Tchicai** a legend may be pushing it a bit, but this incisive saxophonist has maintained his stature among aficionados as a questing free-jazz improviser for some five decades. He's supported by the first-rate rhythm team of the drummer **Billy Hart** and the bassist **Cecil McBee,** and two Boston-based jazz stalwarts, the guitarist **Garrison Fewell** and the saxophonist **Charlie Kohlhase.**

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Feb. 6-11: The acoustic guitarist **Earl Klugh** plays jazz that won't ruffle a feather.

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (212-744-1600)—Through Feb. 10: The stage and screen legend **Rita Moreno,** who has a Tony, an Emmy, a Grammy, and an Oscar to her credit.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—The drummer **Matt Wilson's** Arts and Crafts band (here Feb. 7-11) may lack the antic streak of his earlier saxophone-based quartet, but with strong soloists in the trumpeter **Terell Stafford** and the keyboardist **Gary Versace,** the ensemble has plenty of post-bop bite. Wilson, for his part, takes care of the wit and charm.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Feb. 13: The vocalist **Tierney Sutton** brings her well-versed band, featuring two bassists and the able pianist **Christian Jacob,** to celebrate the release of her new collection of standards, "On the Other Side."

THE STONE
Avenue C at 2nd St. (No phone)—This East Village performance space is home to a guitar festival Feb. 7-13. It starts with **Jon Catler,** a longtime associate of the minimalist composer La Monte Young, and **Brian Chase,** the drummer for the downtown rockers the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. But don't expect the latter's garage-punk sound, as the two will be playing droning music on guitars designed for just intonation (a mathematical music system). Later that night, **Mary Halvorson,** a guitarist, composer, and occasional singer who is the curator here this month, joins the guitarist **Marc Ribot** and the drummer **Ches Smith.** Feb. 8: **Robbie Lee,** improvising on guitar, woodwinds, and various noisemakers, is followed by the bionic playing of the avant-metal axe man **Mick Barr.** Feb. 11: Acoustic duets with **Elliott Sharp** and Wilco's ubiquitous **Nels Cline.** (For more information, visit www.thestonenyc.com.)

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (212-358-7503)—Feb. 8: **Ned Rothenberg,** a composer and a standout reed and wind instrumentalist who's played with John Zorn, Marc Ribot, and Bobby Previte, stops by with his trio Sync to celebrate the release of their new album, "Inner Diaspora." For this engagement, he's joined by the regular Sync members **Jerome Harris,** on guitar and bass guitar, and **Samir Chatterjee,** on tabla, along with two string virtuosos from the recording, the cellist **Erik Friedlander** and the violinist **Mark Feldman.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Feb. 6-11: **Eric Reed,** much like Marcus Roberts, another Wynton Marsalis band pianist, seems to have the entire jazz-keyboard tradition at his fingertips. His current quintet features the bassist **Gerald Cannon** and the drummer **Willie Jones III,** along with two new members, the saxophonists **Seamus Blake** and **Stacy Dillard.** The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Glitter and Doom: German Portraits from the 1920s"** features work by ten Weimar-era artists, including Otto Dix, George Grosz, and Ludwig Meidner. Through Feb. 19. ♦ **"Louis Comfort Tiffany and Laurelton Hall: An Artist's Country Estate."** Through May 20. ♦ **"Nan Kempner: American Chic."** Through March 4. ♦ Battered, decapitated kings, prophets, and apostles abound in **"Set in Stone: The Face in Medieval Sculpture."** The survey includes some intact busts—notably late-Roman portraits in marble, and eerie polychromed-wood reliquaries, with compartments in the breast or the skull to contain a shard of bone or a lock of hair. Most of the heads on display, though, were severed from their context on the façades of cathedrals and in the courts of power by iconoclastic or revolutionary zealots. A side gallery describes state-of-the-art neutron-activation analysis, which allows scholars to determine the quarry from which a particular block of limestone came, and then to match that stone with architectural materials at a given site, thus suggesting likely homes for the free-floating faces. Through Feb. 19. ♦ **"Coaxing the Spirits to Dance: Art of the Papuan Gulf."** Through Sept. 3. ♦ **"Discovering Tutankhamun: The Photographs of Harry Burton."** Through April 29. ♦ **"One of a Kind: The Studio Craft Movement."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Doug Aitken: Sleepwalkers."** Through Feb. 12, nightly from 5 to 10. ♦ **"OMA in Beijing: China Central Television Headquarters by Rem Koolhaas and Ole Scheeren."** Through Feb. 26. ♦ **"Artistic Collaborations: Fifty Years at Universal Limited Art Editions."** Through April 9. ♦ **"Live/Work: Performance into Drawing."** Works on paper that relate to performance-art pieces. Through May 7. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Spanish Painting from El Greco to Picasso: Time, Truth, and Memory"** includes works by Zurbarán, Murillo, Velázquez, and Cotán, among many others. Through March 28. ♦ **"Family Pictures"** showcases contemporary photography and video depicting families and children; artists include Patty Chang, Loretta Lux, Sally Mann, Gregory Crewdson, Gillian Wearing, and Thomas Struth, among others. Opens Feb. 9. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Kiki Smith: A Gathering, 1980-2005."** Through Feb. 11. ♦ **"Photography and the Self: The Legacy of F. Holland Day."** Through March 11. ♦ **Terence Koh** has his first solo museum show in the U.S., an installation in the museum's lobby. Through May 27. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY
Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—**"Gold."** Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"The Butterfly Conservatory: Tropical Butterflies Alive in Winter."** Through May 28. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

AMERICAN FOLK ART MUSEUM
45 W. 53rd St. (212-265-1040)—**"Martín Ramírez."** Through April 29. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10:30 to 5:30, and until 7:30 on Fridays.)

MARCELLUS HALL

MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM
225 Madison Ave., at 36th St. (212-685-0008)—**"Saul Steinberg: Illuminations."** Through March 4. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5, Fridays, 10:30 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN
40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—The diverse works in **"Radical Lace & Subversive Knitting"** reject notions of sentimental handiwork or coy décor, turning dainty and delicate filigree techniques to more rough-and-tumble mediums, to political discourse, or to decidedly nontraditional subjects. Cal Lane takes found car parts—doors, hoods, fenders—then perforates them with an oxyacetylene torch to make lacy, flowery patterns; Carson Fox's knotted-wire panel evokes the Victorian hair jewelry made by grieving women, but greatly enlarged. Dave Cole's 2005 "Knitting Machine" project also toys with scale, and to exhilarating effect: a video documents how he used two John Deere excavators, a pair of pointed metal telephone poles, lengths of colored felt, and a cherry picker to knit a hugely coarse U.S. flag. At the other end of the spectrum, Althea Merback's minuscule sweaters and gloves—she makes her knitting needles from superfine medical wire—are a marvel of obsessive precision. Through June 17. (Open daily, 10 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 8.)

SNUG HARBOR CULTURAL CENTER
1000 Richmond Terrace, Staten Island (718-448-2500)—Snug Harbor, the stately but decrepit old-sailors' home, makes a charming setting for the four-person exhibition **"STORYlines/Narrative in Drawing."** Dawn Clements's panoramic, perspectivally complex pieces in ink and ballpoint pen are pastiches of uninhabited sets from movies about the Titanic. Martin Wilner's tightly graphic yet expansively imaginative work unites details borrowed from the news with interior phantasmagoria; his artist's-book collaborations with Clements showcase the quality of their characteristic lines. Jeff Gabel works in pencil, scripting compulsive graphic-novel scenarios, and Penny Juneman illustrates an insectile fairyland beneath fern fronds. In the Newhouse Center for Contemporary Art, through March 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Galleries are usually open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6; please call the gallery for exact hours.

RINEKE DIJKSTRA
The Dutch photographer has relaxed her approach to portraiture over the years, and these large color pictures of children and adolescents are her most casual and engaging work so far. Taken in parks in Barcelona, Xiamen, Liverpool, New York, and elsewhere, they teeter between formality and informality, falling into a comfortable middle ground already occupied by Thomas Struth, Wolfgang Tillmans, Judith Joy Ross, and others. Still, few photographers achieve Dijkstra's balance of empathy and specificity, and all her subjects have a lovely, substantial presence in these sun-dappled landscapes. That's especially true of a quartet in Amsterdam, perched and sprawled by a lake in a grouping that recalls Manet's "Déjeuner sur l'Herbe" with offhand charm. Through Feb. 17. (Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160.)

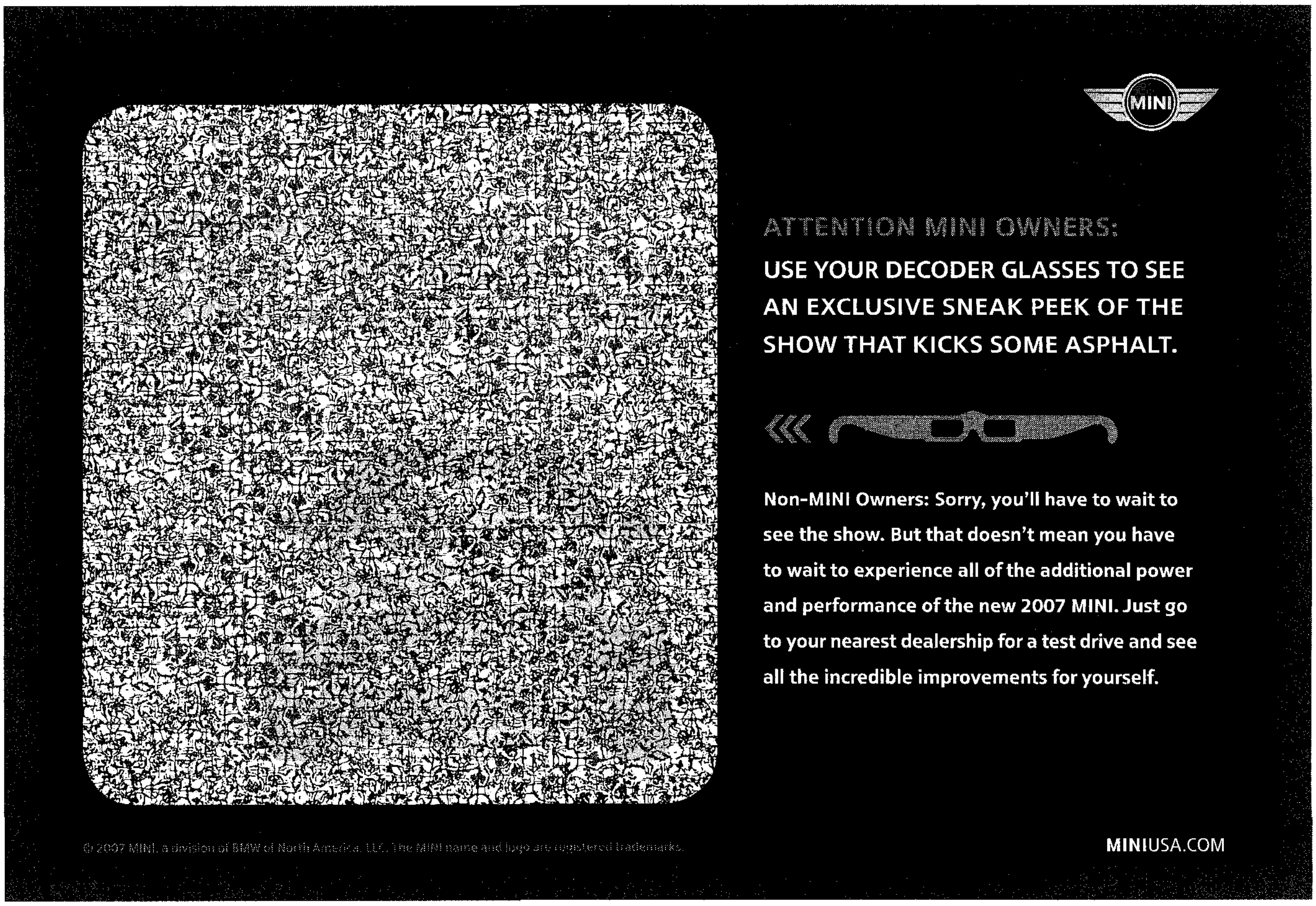
IRVING PENN
It's tempting to see Penn's flower photographs—many of which were first reproduced in the pages of *Vogue*—as emblems of fashion. A magenta poppy looks like a wrinkled taffeta skirt; five wet gerbera daisies glisten like ruby-encrusted brooches. But the twenty-two astonishing prints here, made from pictures taken between 1967 and 2006, cannot be reduced to neat similes; Penn prefers a little mess. Most of his flowers are well past their prime, their petals curling and darkening, pollen dusting their lower half; they're blowsy but grand. Others are nearly dead, like the pair of tulips that are little more than stems supporting a few dried, dangling petals. For Penn, perfection is overrated and beauty never really dies. Through Feb. 17. (Pace/MacGill, 32 E. 57th St. 212-759-7999.)

Short List

DEBBIE FLEMING CAFFERY: Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868. Through Feb. 24. **DAVID HAMMONS:** L & M, 45 E. 78th St. 212-861-0020. Through March 10. **SAUL STEINBERG:** Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338. Through Feb. 10.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

DANIEL BUREN
Two installations of work from the French master of stripes. Inside the gallery is a collection of Buren's signature works from the mid-sixties, in which he attached striped fabric bought at Parisian markets to stretchers; these instant "paintings" are altered only with scalloped borders and occasional grids painted in white. The second part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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
WARTIME PORTRAITS

"I simply wanted to look in the face of someone who'd seen something unforgettable," the photographer Suzanne Opton says of the extraordinary portraits she made of American soldiers who have served in Iraq or Afghanistan. Opton asked her subjects, all of whom were stationed at New York's Fort Drum between tours of duty in 2004 and 2005, to rest their heads on a table, and she photographed their horizontal faces up close, so that they nearly fill the frame. The posture is vulnerable and startlingly intimate, as if these young men and women were facing someone in bed or on a stretcher, and the results are riveting. Opton catches soldiers both on guard and off, looking out and looking inward simultaneously, and we can only imagine what they're thinking, what they've done, and what they dread. The group of large color prints that go up at Peter Hay Halpert's new Chelsea gallery next week give these heads a monumental, sculptural presence, but they never feel bombastic or preachy, only heartbreaking. Dispensing with theatrics, Opton finds genuine drama. If these people have seen something unforgettable, so have we.

—Vince Aletti

of the show is a new work installed next door. Plexiglas panels hung from the defunct High Line train trestle offer staggered surfaces, simultaneously transparent and reflective, like minimalist stained glass. After Buren's opulent Guggenheim extravaganza in 2005, the return to a gritty street locale feels refreshing. Through Feb. 15. (Bortolami Dayan, 510 W. 25th St. 212-727-2050.)

STAN DOUGLAS
You'd have to sit in the gallery for almost three days straight to see all of "Klatsassin," Douglas's avant-Western modelled on the multi-perspective narrative of Kurosawa's "Rashomon." Shot in high-definition video in the fern-carpeted forests of British Columbia's Cariboo Mountains, the movie investigates an 1864 skirmish between Tsilhqot'in warriors and gold miners, in which the chief Klatsassin—which literally means "we do not know his name"—is taken prisoner, tried, and hanged. Dramatically intriguing and gorgeous to look at, the project subtly considers the perils of an incompletely planned invasion. Extended viewing only piques the appetite for more. Through Feb. 10. (Zwirner, 525 W. 19th St. 212-727-2070.)

SEYDOU KEITA / LOLO VELEKO
For a show called "Fashion," black-and-white photographs by Keita, the great Malian studio portraitist, who died in 2001, are shown alongside small color street portraits by Veleko, a young South African who made a vivid impression in I.C.P.'s "Snap Judgments" exhibition last year. The pairing is especially flattering to Veleko, whose appeal is due primarily to her eye for creatively dressed subjects; she's the Bill Cunningham of Johannesburg, and for the purposes of this show, that's quite enough. But face to face with the marvellous gravity of Keita's work, Veleko's looks sprightly but slight. Through Feb. 24. (Danziger, 521 W. 26th St. 212-629-6778.)

"COSMOLOGIES"
The appropriately sweeping scope of "Cosmologies" mixes mandalas by Tibetan monks, Jain mystics, Ad Reinhardt, and Kimsooja (the last in the form of a round jukebox); astrological charts by the seventeenth-century theosophist Robert Fludd and the twentieth-century neo-expressionist Anselm Kiefer; Mimbres pottery, masks from Burkina Faso, and the international financial-scandal charts of Mark Lombardi. Cerith Wyn Evans's wall text links macro to micro by explaining how motes of dust on an astronomical photograph were mistakenly catalogued as galaxies. The all-star cast includes Vija Celmins, Dawn Clements, Josiah McElheny, Nancy Holt, Alfred Jensen, Jess, Ward Shelley, Shahzia Sikander, Martin Wilner, Adolf Wolfli, and more. Through Feb. 10. (James Cohan, 533 W. 26th St. 212-714-9500.)

Short List

JAMES BIDGOOD: ClampArt, 521-531 W. 25th St. 646-230-0020. Through Feb. 17. **ROZ CHAST:** Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410. Through Feb. 10. **MARK GROTJAHN:** Kern, 532 W. 20th St. 212-367-9663. Through Feb. 28. **JONAS MEKAS:** Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549. Through Feb. 10. **PAULINA OLOWSKA:** Metro, 519 W. 24th St. 212-206-7100. Through Feb. 10. **SUZANNE OPTON:** Peter Hay Halpert, 511 W. 25th St. 646-827-9890. Opens Feb. 15. **JENNY PERLIN / PETER WELZ:** The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793. Through Feb. 10. **SERGIO PREGO:** Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923. Through Feb. 10. **HENRY WESSEL:** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave., at 24th St. 212-989-7600, through Feb. 10; Cowles, 537 W. 24th St. 212-741-8999, through Feb. 17.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

CLAIRE FONTAINE
What better location for an exhibition of work by a hip art collective named after a brand of French school notebooks than a hip Chinatown gallery named after a fictional character created by another art collective, Bernadette Corporation? And what's hipper than insurrection? A brick (presumably for throwing at windows) is wrapped in a book cover—Guy Debord's "La Société du Spectacle," naturally—while an iPod plays a Debord film. A key chain with miniature saws and bike spokes is indicated for picking locks. Tourist brochures of the U.S. and France are written in Arabic. An accompanying catalogue contains an essay referencing usual suspects like Kafka, Foucault, Duchamp, Rilke, and Walter Benjamin. The message is revolution, but the delivery and setting feel very radical chic. Through Feb. 11. (Reena Spaulings, 165 East Broadway. 212-477-5006.)

CARRIE MOYER
Where painters in the late seventies and eighties took an everything-but-the-kitchen-sink approach to painting—the postmodern predilection for multiple references crammed onto one canvas—their younger brethren are more circumspect. Two sources is the industry standard; three is pushing it. Moyer's tightly constructed paintings borrow from sixties post-painterly abstraction and generally add one other element, like disco glitter or Francis Bacon-like faces. Here, it's primordial female images: a compressed silhouette of the prehistoric Venus of Willendorf or fertility vessels with multiple breasts. Abstract Expressionism's affection for archetypes is also buried in here somewhere. And, since those painters weren't exactly paragons of feminist enlightenment, this only enhances Moyer's sly, knowing redux of mid-twentieth-century painting. Through Feb. 11. (Canada, 55 Chrystie St. 212-925-4631.)

Short List

RYAN MCGINLEY: Team, 83 Grand St. 212-279-9219. Through Feb. 10. **CHARLES MILLER:** Think Tank 3, at 447 Hudson St. 212-647-8595. Through March 15. **HARRIET SHORR:** Pelavin, 13 Jay St. 212-925-9424. Through March 3.

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
In the sixth week of its two-month-long winter season, the company introduces a new program into the rotation: "Contemporary Quartet," performed Friday and Sunday, comprises four recent works made for the company by the always refined Christopher Wheeldon, Eliot Feld, the ubiquitous Jorma Elo, and Peter Martins, the company's director. And on Feb. 13, "Visionary Voices" contrasts Andrei Ratmansky's imaginative and profound "folk" ballet from last year, "Russian Seasons," with the lush decadence of Wheeldon's "Klavier" and Balanchine's 1946 deconstruction of the ballet vocabulary, "The Four Temperaments." ♦ Feb. 7 at 7:30 and Feb. 10 at 2: "Serenade," "Dybbuk," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." ♦ Feb. 8 at 8: "Episodes," "Tribute," and "Vienna Waltzes." ♦ Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 11 at 3: "Carousel (A Dance)," "Intermezzo No. 1," "Slice to Sharp," and "Friandises." ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: "Square Dance," "Liebeslieder Walzer," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 13 at 7:30: "Klavier," "Russian Seasons," and "The Four Temperaments." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-870-5570. Through Feb. 25.)

ARMITAGE GONE! DANCE
Karole Armitage's two-year-old New York company has a polish that belies its tender age; its elegant dancers move with satisfying sureness through the curving ballet-based phrases of her new "Ligeti Essays." On a white stage dominated by a silvery tree, black-clad figures trace patterns to snippets of György Ligeti's music, in moods ranging from fire-alarm urgent to faintly romantic. A revised version of "Time Is the Echo of an Axe Within a Wood" (2004) preserves the original's beaded curtains and slippery dream logic. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Feb. 6-7 at 7:30, Feb. 8 at 7, Feb. 9 at 8, Feb. 10 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 11 at 2 and 7:30.)

HAMBURG BALLET
John Neumeier—an American who has spent most of his career in Germany—brings his company to BAM, for the first time in more than two decades, to perform his visually austere adaptation of Thomas Mann's "Death in Venice." Here, Aschenbach is a choreographer whose ideas have gone stale, in a rehearsal studio filled with the music of Bach and dancers performing sterile ballet variations. His yearning takes him to Venice and to the lush chords

SUZANNE OPTON

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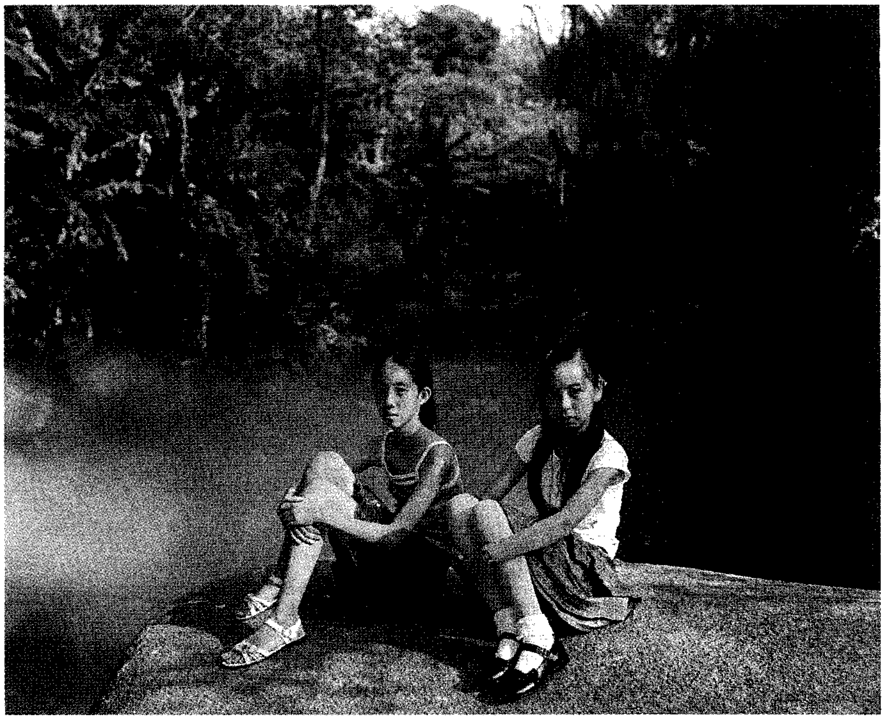
of Wagner, particularly "Tristan und Isolde." The scene is set for some wonderful dancing, especially for the men—an innocently suggestive solo for Tadzio, boys tussling on the beach, a sensual trio with two hunky one-night stands. (Howard Gilman Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave. 718-636-4100. Feb 7-10 at 7:30.)

BIG DANCE THEATRE
Annie-B Parson and Paul Lazar are known for implausible combinations of wildly disparate source materials. For "The Other Here," commissioned by the Japan Society for its hundredth anniversary, the material includes two Chekhovian stories by the Japanese novelist Masuji Ibuse, scenes from a conference of American life-insurance agents, and infectious pop songs from Okinawa. It's hard to imagine another company with the boldness, stagecraft, and skill to weave all this together successfully. (333 E. 47th St. 212-752-1258. Feb. 7-9 at 7:30 and Feb. 10 at 3 and 7:30.)

ISABEL LEWIS & ERIKA HAND / KATIE WORKUM & WILL RAWLS
Two up-and-coming choreographic duos share a bill at Dance Theatre Workshop. "Ark from a Country Once Forested" is the third collaboration between Workum and Rawls, both seasoned (and busy) modern dancers. Lewis and Hand's "The Live Performance by the Labor Union" considers the meaning of originality in an art form packed with precedent, as the dancers construct deliberately imperfect imitations of Cunningham, Graham, and Forsythe. (219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Feb. 7-10 at 7:30.)



Rineke Dijkstra's recent photographs, all of visitors to parks, are at Marian Goodman.

WHITE ROAD DANCE MEDIA
An all-female ensemble out of hipster Brooklyn presents work by Marisa Gruneberg. "Keep, for Sake" is a Western without cowboys, in which a girl dies of a broken heart. A short Super-8 movie shows an exotic dancer, nearly nude in the snow, gathering the elements for a picnic. All the works on the program have hints of story—the destruction of Pompeii, the death of a friend. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. Feb. 8-10 at 8.)

JILL SIGMAN/THINKDANCE
Ideas dominate Sigman's new piece, "Rupture," a meditation on the trauma of things falling apart. She integrates the theme of a physical wound—a ruptured calf muscle—with her observations of the devastation of the 2004 tsunami and the scars, visible and invisible, left by the partition of Berlin. The movement similarly encompasses everything from her own deconstructive technique to northern-Indian kathak and folk dance. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Feb. 8-10 at 8:30 and Feb. 11 at 7:30.)

MAGBANA DRUM AND DANCE
In Guinea, a *magbana* is a minibus taxi, the kind you can hop on and off of. In New York, it's the name of an ensemble that offers glimpses of the various percussion and dance traditions of Guinea. Magbana's performance as part of the 92nd Street Y's "Sundays @ 3" series juxtaposes dances from celebratory rituals (weddings, initiations) with dance-for-dance's-sake compositions. (Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500. Feb. 11 at 3.)

"URBAN CITIZEN"
Dance New Amsterdam kicks off its spring season with a mini-festival of international choreographers, presenting the work of Mei-Ying Ng (from Malaysia), Karine Ponties (from Belgium), Deganit Shemy (from Israel), and Pavel Zustiak (from Slovakia). There will be different programs each night. (280 Broadway, at Chambers St. 212-625-8369. Feb. 8-10 and Feb. 15-17 at 8.)

"STARS OF THE 21ST CENTURY"
Scheduled headliners in the annual showcase of imported and domestic ballet power couples include the Royal Ballet's Johan Kobborg (returning from a recent injury) and Alina Cojocaru, along with the Munich Ballet's Lucia Lacarra and her husband and partner, Cyril Pierre. Also appearing are the rising Kirov star Leonid Sarafanov (with Olesia Novikova); an intriguing couple from the Kiev Ballet, Anastasia and Denis Matvienko; and the Paris Opera Ballet *étoile* Benjamin Pech, dancing with the Hamburg Ballet principal Silvia Azzoni. (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Feb. 12 at 7:30.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The week begins with a revival of the Franco Zeffirelli production of the classic verist double bill, **"Cavalleria Rusticana"** and **"Pagliacci."** The first features such singers as Dolora Zajick, Salvatore Licitra, and Mark Delavan, while the second boasts Krassimira Stoyanova, Licitra, Lado Ataneli, and Russell Braun in the leading roles; Marco Armiliato conducts. (Feb. 7 at 7:30 and Feb. 10 at 1:30.) ♦ Anna Netrebko, the starring attraction in Bellini's **"I Puritani,"** sings the role of Elvira Walton with honest feeling, an awesome dynamic range, and a command of legato phrasing that approaches the limits of human possibility. Also with Gregory Kunde, Franco Vassallo, and John Relyea (who brings his rock-solid basso to the role of Giorgio); Patrick Summers conducts in a blunt but competent manner. (Feb. 8 at 7:30.) ♦ Renée Fleming has treated New York audiences to her plangent rendition of Tatiana's Letter Scene from Tchaikovsky's **"Eugene Onegin"** before, but this month's performances will mark the first time that she has sung the complete role at the Met. She will be joined onstage by Dmitri Hvorostovsky (as Onegin) and Ramón Vargas—the kind of gilt-edged casting that befits one of the conductor Valery Gergiev's once-a-year appearances. (Feb. 9 and Feb. 13 at 8.) ♦ Karita Mattila may be best known to Met audiences for her searing portrayal of Strauss's Salome, but her rendition of the title role of Janáček's **"Jenůfa"** is equally distinctive. Also with Judith Forst, Kim Begley, and Jorma Silvasti; Jiří Bělohlávek, a renowned Czech master, conducts. (Feb. 10 at 8.) ♦ A revival of the durable Zeffirelli production of **"La Traviata,"** with Mary Dunleavy, José Luis Duval, and Charles Taylor in the leading roles; Carlo Rizzi. (Feb. 12 at 7:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 212-362-6000.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

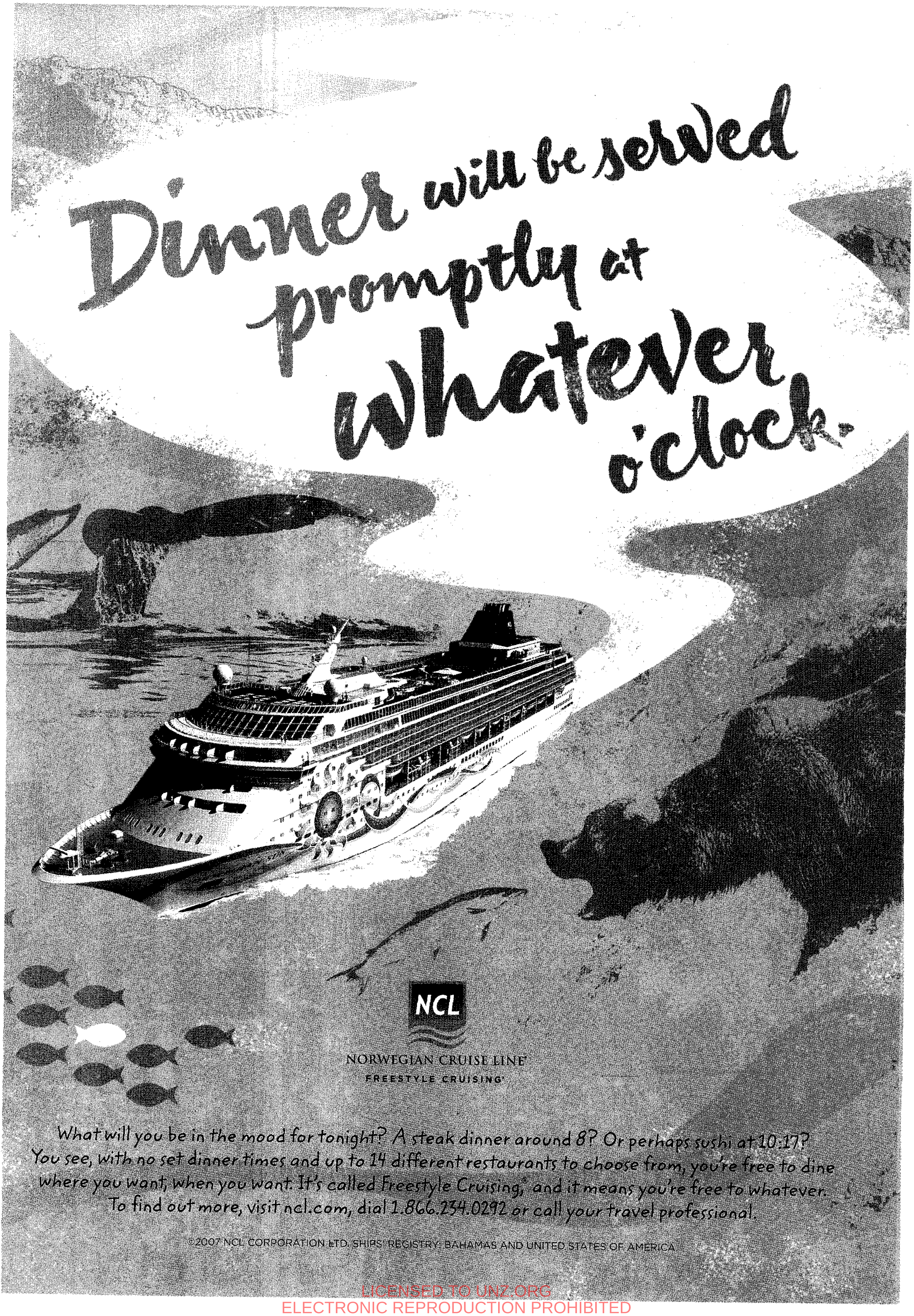
NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lars Vogt, a young German pianist with a dusky tone, vigorous delivery, and an active mind, will be out front in Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 in C Major, part of a program that also includes Debussy's "Images" and a piece by the Swedish composer Daniel Börtz ("Parodos"); Alan Gilbert conducts. (Feb. 8 at 7:30, Feb. 9 at 11 A.M., and Feb. 10 at 8.) ♦ The avuncular composer-lecturer Peter Schickele will share his insights on "Images" before a performance of the complete work led by Gilbert, in an abbreviated rush-hour concert. (Feb. 13 at 6:45.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

CHOIR AND ORCHESTRA OF THE CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA
Kent Tritle conducts his able charges in a program combining Renaissance and Baroque music by both Spanish and Italian composers (featuring Victoria's "Salve Regina" and Vivaldi's "Beatus Vir"). (Park Ave. at 84th St. 212-288-2520. Feb. 7 at 8.)

AMERICAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Leonard Bernstein's Symphony No. 2, the Auden-inspired "Age of Anxiety," is the main attraction in a program of works by the composer-conductors George Szell, Paul Kletzki, and Harold Farberman, in the conductor Leon Botstein's latest foray into the unknown. (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-721-6500. Feb. 9 at 8.)

BOSTON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
An impressive group of vocal soloists—including Yvonne Naef, Paul Groves, Andrew Gangestad, and José van Dam—joins the orchestra, the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, and the indefatigable conductor James Levine in a performance of Berlioz's "La Damnation de Faust," a glorious, sprawling early-Romantic oratorio. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 12 at 8.)

MINNESOTA ORCHESTRA
In his three years at the helm, Osmo Vänskä has built on the technical accomplishments that Edo de Waart demanded from the group in the nineteen-nineties, leading performances full of forceful expressivity. Feb. 13 at 8: Beethoven's Symphony No. 4 is the center of a program bookended by Sibelius's "Nightride and Sunrise" and Symphony No. 5. ♦ Feb. 14 at 8: Turnabout is fair play, with Sibelius's chilling Symphony No. 4 preceding Beethoven's triumphant Fifth. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)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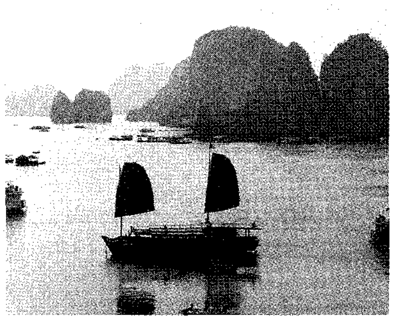

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RECITALS

ARTEMIS QUARTET
One of Europe's most honored young string quartets comes to Zankel Hall to perform music by Webern, Beethoven (the "Razumovsky" Quartet No. 2), and Schoenberg (the heady, late-Romantic Quartet No. 1 in D Minor). (212-247-7800. Feb. 7 at 7:30.)

NEW YORK FESTIVAL OF SONG
Dvořák's contribution to American music goes far beyond the "New World" Symphony he completed in New York: in his absorption of the Negro spirituals brought to him by his star pupil, Harry T. Burleigh, he created a foundation style that American composers would draw on for decades. The New York Festival of Song celebrates the composer and his influence in a program featuring works by Burleigh, Will Marion Cook, and Dvořák himself (the "Moravian Duets"); Steven Blier and Michael Barrett are at the piano. (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Feb. 7-8 at 8.)

QNG: QUARTET NEW GENERATION
This young all-female German recorder collective produces something a little more advanced than the tootling noises you may have made as a kid. Playing on exotic-looking (and sounding) instruments, they offer an aggressive program of new works by Gordon Beeferman and Nissim Schaul, along with more consoling fare from the English Renaissance masters Robert Parsons and John Bull. (Thalia Theatre, Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Feb. 8 at 7:30.)

MUSIC AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Feb. 8 at 8: The museum's series of "Piano Forte" concerts continues with an appearance by Till Fellner, an emerging artist of uncommon intelligence and sensitivity whose career was sidelined three years ago by tinnitus. His New York comeback features Beethoven's Sonata No. 6 in F Major, Bach's Three-Part Inventions, and Schubert's Sonata in A Major, D. 959. ♦ Feb. 9 at 8: The young virtuosos of the Metropolitan Museum Artists in Concert (including the cellist Edward Arron and the violist Nicholas Cords) offer a characteristic mixture of music old (Purcell's "Fantasia Upon One Note," Brahms's Piano Quintet) and new (selections from Giovanni Sollima's easygoing "Viaggio in Italia"). (Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. 212-570-3949.)

BARGEMUSIC
Michael Kimmelman, an avocational pianist who is better known as an art critic for the *Times*, joins the able young professionals of the Da-Ponte String Quartet in a program that features works by Beethoven (the String Quartet in F Major, Op. 135), Gershwin, Wolf, and Dvořák (the Piano Quintet). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083. Feb. 10 at 7:30 and Feb. 11 at 4. For a full listing of concerts, see www.bargemusic.org.)

DOWNTOWN MUSIC PRODUCTIONS: "FEEDBACK"
Mimi Stern-Wolfe's freewheeling East Village concert series offers a chance to savor the clashes of classical influences with jazz and pop in music by such composers as Erwin Schulhoff ("Hot Sonata"), Paul Schoenfield, Marty Ehrlich (the jazz wind player, who will perform), and Ravel. (St. Mark's In-the-Bowery, Second Ave. at 10th St. Feb. 11 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

"VIRTUOSO ORGAN"
George Steel's Miller Theatre empire stretches down to midtown for his latest spectacular, an evening with the English organist Kevin Bowyer featuring the kind of impudent new music that the parishioners of St. Thomas Church don't often get to hear—ear-bending works by Xenakis, Ferneyhough, Babbitt, and Wuorinen. (Fifth Ave. at 53rd St. 212-854-7799. Feb. 11 at 5:15. No tickets required.)

CHAMBER MUSIC SOCIETY OF LINCOLN CENTER
One of the most unexpected pleasures of David Finckel and Wu Han's début season is "An English Musical Renaissance: 1900-1930," a festival that explores the mostly neglected chamber music of the composers who prepared the way for the meteoric rise of Benjamin Britten. The first two concerts feature the tenor Russell Thomas. Feb. 11 at 5: Peter Warlock's gripping scena "The Curlew" (for tenor, flute, English horn, and strings), along with works by Purcell, Vaughan Williams, and Bliss. ♦ Feb. 13 at 7:30: Vaughan Williams's powerful cycle "On Wenlock Edge" is the highlight of a program also featuring Bax's lovely

POP NOTES
TOWN AND COUNTRY

Lucinda Williams's new album, **"West"** (Lost Highway), chronicles the death of Williams's mother and the end of a turbulent romance, and the opener, "Are You Alright?" could be addressed to either of the departed ("Are you alright / 'Cause it seems like you disappeared / Are you alright / 'Cause I've been feeling a little scared"). It might also have self-diagnostic value: the song is pretty enough, but lacklustre, as is "Mama You Sweet," the next track, and "Learning How to Live," the one after that.

The mood has been set, and the rest of the album fails to reset it. Snoozy and boozy and often blurry with self-help cliché, material like "Rescue" and "Unsuffer Me" isn't the equal of earlier work. More distressing is the quality of Williams's vocals. Ten years ago, she would have sung a lament like "Everything Has Changed" with a mix of earthy despair and angelic lightness. Now neither foot leaves the ground. Worse, the most pointed breakup songs ("Come On," which mocks her ex-lover for sexual inadequacy, and "Wrap My Head Around That," an interminable half-spoken kiss-off) prove only that Williams, at fifty-four, can still be as petulant and venomous as someone half her age—though it's worth noting that when she was half her age, she was rarely either of those things. The lovely title track is a sad reminder that Williams once wrote songs of such universal beauty that others couldn't wait to cover them.

Mary Weiss was the lead singer of the great Shangri-Las, who carried Shadow Morton's teen melodramas to the highest reaches of pop culture. Now, forty years after the last Shangri-Las record, Weiss is about to release a remarkable solo début, **"Dangerous Game"** (Norton). Backed by the Memphis garage band Reigning Sound, Weiss is in fine voice, and the songs combine the dark innocence of girl-group records with a mature sense of regret. Several sound like outtakes from a great lost Blondie album, including the taut "I Just Missed You" and the torchy title track. The highlights are a pair of gorgeous ballads: "You Can Stay with Me" and "Cry About the Radio," the latter a luminous bit of retro pop that celebrates itself by taking a hard swipe at the modern market: "Kids, kids don't know shit / They just want a hit / I don't write hits."

—*Ben Greenman*

“Elegiac Trio” and a song cycle and violin sonata by Ireland. (Alice Tully Hall. 212-875-5788.)

CONTINUUM: "A NEW WAVE"
The respected longtime group, under the direction of Joel Sachs and Cheryl Seltzer, performs a showcase of works by an eclectic new generation of Israeli immigrant composers, including Hana Ajiashvili, Valentin Bibik, and Benjamin Yusupov (the Tajik composer's Piano Quintet). (Jewish Community Center in Manhattan, Amsterdam Ave. at 76th St. 646-505-5708. Feb. 13 at 8.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE DECOMPOSITION OF THE SOUL
Reviewed below in Now Playing. In German. Opening Feb. 7. (Film Forum.)

HANNIBAL RISING
The story of Hannibal Lecter and his sister as orphans after the Second World War. Directed by Peter Webber and written by Thomas Harris. Starring Gaspard Ulliel, Helena Lia Tachovska, and Gong Li. Opening Feb. 9. (In wide release.)

THE LIVES OF OTHERS
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Feb. 9. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

NORBIT
Eddie Murphy stars as a mild-mannered man and the harridan to whom he is engaged. Directed by Brian Robbins. Opening Feb. 9. (In wide release.)

OPERATION HOMECOMING
Richard E. Robbins's documentary about a project to encourage veterans of the war in Iraq to write about their experiences. Opening Feb. 9. (Film Forum.)

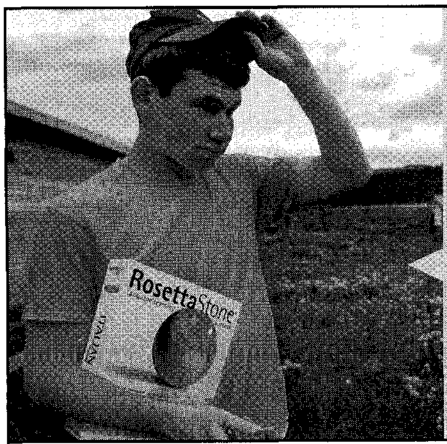
UNCONSCIOUS
A drama about a vanished psychiatrist whose wife and psychiatrist brother-in-law search for him. Directed by Joaquin Oristrell. In Spanish. Opening Feb. 9. (Cinema Village.)

NOW PLAYING

BREAKING AND ENTERING
At home, Will Francis (Jude Law), a fashionable young London architect, has a difficult time. Liv (Robin Wright Penn), his girlfriend of ten years, a melancholy, becalmed beauty of mixed Swedish and American background, has a talented, vivid autistic daughter—a terrific gymnast who won't eat, sleep, or calm down. Will's office in North London is repeatedly burglarized after hours. Will stakes it out one night and follows the thief, a fifteen-year-old boy, Miro (Rafi Gavron), to an apartment in a council flat, where he discovers Miro's mother, Amira (Juliette Binoche), a Bosnian refugee with a refined face and a full peasant body. He starts an affair with her, going back and forth between the two women. The romantic drama is set against the changing milieu of the King's Cross area, a multicultural gathering ground in which not terribly dangerous thieves and hookers from the Balkans and other diasporas try to find some way of fitting into an alien society. Written and directed by Anthony Minghella, the movie is shrewd and benevolent but rather mild—clemency, not judgment, is in Minghella's heart. Vera Farmiga has a hilarious bit as a huffy Balkan streetwalker wearing very little under her overcoat.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/29/07.) (Paris and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE DECOMPOSITION OF THE SOUL
A documentary, written and directed by Nina Toussaint and Massimo Iannetta, about the prison at Hohenschönhausen, in Berlin, which housed political prisoners under the East German regime. The camera pries around the workaday fixtures of the place—the telephones, the slatted wooden bed, the interrogation stool tucked into the corner—while two former inmates tell their stories. Sigrid Paul had tried and failed to reach West Berlin, where her young son lay sick in a hospital. Eventually arrested for harboring students who were also planning to flee, she was sentenced to four years in prison. Hartmut Richter was sent to Hohenschönhausen for helping thirty-three fellow-citizens to breach the border. He has an ironist's rueful air, cracking an occasional half-smile, whereas Paul seems still flattened by her ordeal. The movie preserves its calm, as if its chief task were to record these hateful persecutions without giving in to rage. In German.—*Anthony Lane* (Film Forum.)

DEMON SEED
In this techno-erotic horror movie, Julie Christie is sensational as a sometime child psychotherapist stuck in a loveless marriage with a computer whiz (Fritz Weaver). His greatest accomplishment is a super-thinking computer called Proteus IV—which isn't satisfied with being a machine. After wife and husband separate, Proteus IV takes one look at the woman of the house and decides to father a child with her. Proteus IV may sound like HAL with a sore throat, but he comes off as more of a humanitarian than his human masters (who want to use him for lucrative projects like strip-mining the ocean floor), and he insists that his child will make computers, not humans, obsolete. Although half the film is taken up with the computer's bullying of Christie, the director, Donald Cammell, doesn't con-



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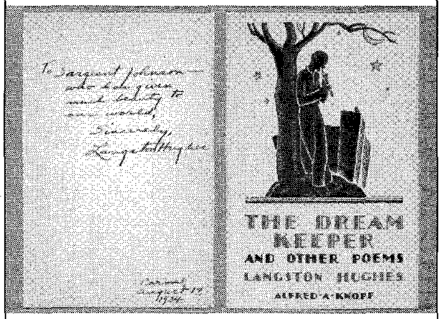

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trol the sex-charged situations in the same way that, say, William Wyler did in "The Collector." But Cammell does stage a stunning action set piece of Proteus IV battling a young scientist (Gerrit Graham), and Christie's passionate, vulnerable performance keeps pulling the entire movie into her point of view. Released in 1977.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade; Feb. 9-10.)

THE DEPARTED

This merrily vicious and violent Martin Scorsese film about cops and gangsters in Boston will never haunt your sleep, as "Taxi Driver" and "Raging Bull" do, but it will keep you excited and amused for well over two hours. A South Boston mobster (Jack Nicholson) recruits a young neighborhood kid and later places him, as a grownup (played by Matt Damon), in the Massachusetts State Police; the police, in turn, place their own undercover guy (Leonardo DiCaprio) in the crime boss's outfit. It's a double-mole story in which the two moles wind up hunting each other. "The Departed" is a remake of the Hong Kong thriller "Infernal Affairs," directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, and it has the speed and volatility of a Hong Kong movie. But Scorsese and the screenwriter, William Monahan, have added weight to the story by digging deep into urban tribal lore—the memories of loyalty and betrayal going back for decades, the nasty old jokes, the bullying insults and invective. Nicholson doesn't seem to take the movie very seriously—he has a ball singing Irish ditties and making rat faces and holding up severed hands—but everyone else is both disciplined and highly adept at delivering the foul-mouthed idiom. With Martin Sheen, Mark Wahlberg, and Alec Baldwin as cops, and Vera Farmiga as a police psychiatrist who is attracted to both young men.—*D.D.* (10/16/06) (In wide release.)

DREAMGIRLS

Bill Condon's adaptation of the 1981 Broadway musical, the barely disguised tale of Berry Gordy and the rise of the Supremes, in the sixties, has an irresistible momentum. There are written expository passages and photomontages chronicling the events of the period, but just about everything else is sung. The songs aren't commentary on the drama; they are the drama. The three women in the original group are played by Anika Noni Rose, Beyoncé Knowles, and Jennifer Hudson, whose character, the oversized Effie, doesn't fit—she has a big, soulful voice and an even bigger mouth. She's thrown out but not forgotten, and Beyoncé, whom we had barely noticed at first, moves to the center of the movie. Based on that glamorous imp Diana Ross, she allows the Berry Gordy figure (Jamie Foxx) to dress her up as a swank mannequin but finally breaks free. In its way, the picture is a serious study of the issue of commercial packaging versus art.—*D.D.* (12/25/06 & 1/1/07) (In wide release.)

HALF-COCKED

This raw and moody drama from 1994 by the husband-and-wife team of Suki Hawley and Michael Galinsky (they co-wrote, she directed and edited, he photographed, in appealingly grainy black-and-white) captures a moment of grungy charm when independent art-rock scenes were new and resolutely local. A quintet living in a ramshackle house in Louisville get a gig at a local club, but the show turns sour when the vain, pretentious glam-punk Otis (Ian Svenonius) goes onstage and smacks Tara (Tara Jane O'Neil), the quintet's spiritual leader—and his sister—for spoiling his encore. In revenge, Tara steals his van and equipment and drives her band to Chattanooga, where they scuffle along on fear and desperation. Though the aesthetic is rough-and-ready, Hawley is a sincere and sensitive storyteller who brings the characters to life with subtle, oblique touches that show who they are without saying too much about them. Casting highly regarded indie rockers and filling the soundtrack with their songs, Hawley movingly roots their music in a way of life as well as in the grimy urban landscapes they inhabit.—*Richard Brody* (Anthology Film Archives; Feb. 13.)

LÀ-BAS

In this cinematic first-person essay about Israel, the Brussels-born and Paris-based director Chantal Akerman uses a lightweight video camera the way an artist uses a sketchpad to capture visual thoughts on the wing. The results are exquisite and darkly philosophical. She starts out recording her own literal standpoint—the view out the window of the apartment she's sublet in Tel Aviv, through the scrim of a bamboo shade, toward the neighbors in apartments across the way and in the street below. The metaphorical force of her obscured vistas becomes clear as Akerman's life imitates her art: she sleeps through a suicide bombing committed at a beachfront café a short walk from her flat. When she goes to that beach, the stunningly pictorial seascapes she composes, reminiscent of paintings by Seurat and Courbet, suggest the agonized state of permanent exile that she alludes to in her voice-over monologue: Jewish identity is one with modern European intellectual and cultural life—which gave rise to the Holocaust, and which is itself under siege.—*R.B.* (French Institute Alliance Française; Feb. 9.)

THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND

For the role of General Idi Amin Dada, the dictator of Uganda in the nineteen-seventies, Forest Whitaker has transformed himself. The laugh has become enormous, the arms like grappling hooks. This dictator has a terrifying affability: like many sociopaths, he can be intensely empathic. He figures out what people want, but once you have received his generosity, he believes you belong to him forever. Whitaker goes all the way into Amin's childlike flights of fantasy and egotistical visions, and, as he speaks, one eye opens wide and the other droops malevolently—even his vision is schizoid. James McAvoy is the cocky young Scottish doctor who becomes the General's physician and confidant. Flattered by the great man's interest in him, he refuses to notice the purges and the slaughter going on in the country. Kevin Macdonald, who earlier made documentaries ("One Day in September" and "Touching the Void"), concentrates on the relationship of the two men, and makes something tense and alive out of it. With Gillian Anderson. Shot in Uganda.—*D.D.* (10/2/06) (In wide release.)

LETTERS FROM IWO JIMA

In the early scenes of Clint Eastwood's "Flags of Our Fathers," the Japanese Army, dug into caves and tunnels, lure the Americans far onto the beach by holding their fire. Now, in a unique reversal of perspective, Eastwood brings us inside the caves, and, cast among the Others, we find ourselves in the morally demanding but exhilarating position of rooting for them. Taken together with "Flags," this movie is a considerable act of ethical imagination, but it's not a great film. Both the defender of the island, General Kuribayashi (Ken Watanabe), and his friend and fellow-officer Baron Nishi (Tsuyoshi Ihara), an Olympic equestrian before the war, are such idealized figures—modest, humane, and gallant—that they lose any serious interest as characters. The young Japanese soldier Saigo (Kazunari Ninomiya), a gentle baker who was conscripted into the Army and just wants to get back to his family, is meant to be a life-affirming presence among the death cultists, but, as constructed by the screenwriter, Iris Yamashita, he's a slight and bashful fellow who can't carry the philosophical weight that's been assigned to him. The movie was impressively but monotonously shot by the cinematographer Tom Stern in the same style as "Flags of Our Fathers"—in a largely black-and-white palette, with occasional flashes of wine-dark blood or bits of orange flame. In Japanese.—*D.D.* (1/15/07) (In wide release.)

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE

A charming, independently made family comedy about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. His seven-year-old daughter, Olive (Abigail Breslin), is entering a Little Miss Sunshine contest; his stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), has a private dream in which he is a Nietzschean Übermensch; his wife's brother (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Is winning everything? The writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team of Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, narrowly avoid the family-comedy pitfalls of whimsy and mush, but Arndt has a good ear for domestic irritations and the acting is just tough enough to keep us off balance. With Alan Arkin and Toni Collette as the family's realists.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

this pass? Or is it the creatures—a mixture of animal, vegetable, and alien—that Ofelia meets in a stone labyrinth, and under whose eyes she endures a series of harsh, not to say sadistic, challenges? At times, her adventures are hard to watch, and the whole film works at a pitch of violence that will shock admirers of more placid fantasy. The result is provoking, inventive, and clever to a fault; everything has been planned and thought through with such care that some of the spontaneity has been squeezed from the proceedings. If it lives and breathes, it is largely thanks to López and to Álex Angulo, who is wonderful in the Chekhovian role of a good doctor. In Spanish.—*A.L.* (1/8/07) (In wide release.)

TABLES FOR TWO

CENTOVINI

25 W. Houston St. (212-219-2113)—The unceasing traffic of Houston Street and the construction pylons and plastic netting along the sidewalk might distract an unwary passerby from this whimsically elegant wine bar and restaurant. But on the other side of the heavy gray drapes that protect the room from winter drafts, all the chaos of the outside world disappears. The white terrazzo marble bar, with comfortable, Art Deco-ish stools, is the centerpiece of the room; gorgeous blown-glass cones hang overhead. Laid out by the design shop Moss—whose owners are partners in the restaurant with Nicola Marzovilla, of I Trulli—the place is an eccentric, vaguely European fantasy: the black-and-white Davies and Starr drawings of oval faces along one wall, the fanciful, elaborate chandeliers, the handsome, slightly aloof waiters.

As one would expect, great care has been given to the wine list (there's also an attached wine store, with an almost preposterous chandelier composed of clusters of vividly colored glass grapes). If guidance is required, the bartender might lean in with a few poetic words. "This is a quirky one," he said one evening, of a Lacrima di Morro d'Alba. "It tastes a bit of berry and florals, and opens up into a cherry." Sold.

For a light dinner, or a late-night snack, there's much on the menu to be savored. *Bignè*, puffy balls of fried dough, contained an infusion of salami and Pecorino; a mâche salad was topped with parsnip chips that added a perfect crunch. The pastas, given a pedigree at the bottom of the menu—Marzovilla's mother, Addolorata, makes them by hand—mostly delivered; the maccheroncini had a nicely seasoned Bolognese sauce enlivened with crisp little peas. The main courses tend to be less successful. A recent offering of venison was oversalted, though the meat underneath the saline crust had a delicately gamy tang. Veal cheeks, remarkably tender, were bland. A too tomatoey caponatina still outperformed the somewhat limp piece of bass it accompanied. But the steamed chocolate pudding, rich and creamy, smoothed away all the rough patches, and one felt almost ready to head back out into the world. (Open daily for lunch and dinner. Entrées $18-$32.)

—*Andrea Thompson*

NOTES ON A SCANDAL

A sensationally nasty and perceptive entertainment about sexual obsession and class. Judi Dench is the sixty-five-ish Barbara, a desperately lonely but formidable teacher in a dreary North London comprehensive school; Cate Blanchett is Sheba, her protégée at the school, a comfortable married bohemian who teaches art and falls in love with a cheeky fifteen-year-old working-class student (Andrew Simpson). Patrick Marber has adapted Zoë Heller's novel, which was written entirely from Barbara's point of view, and the material has now been cast in the third person; the camera observes all the characters objectively while Barbara's acerbic, self-deceiving narration wickedly frames the action. The suspense builds mercilessly as the guileless Sheba, whose placid existence is threatened by her heedless love affair, falls into the clutches of her devouring older "friend." Philip Glass's swirling music presses the issue with unnecessary insistence. With Bill Nighy as Sheba's outraged husband. Directed by Richard Eyre.—*D.D.* (1/15/07) (In wide release.)

PAN'S LABYRINTH

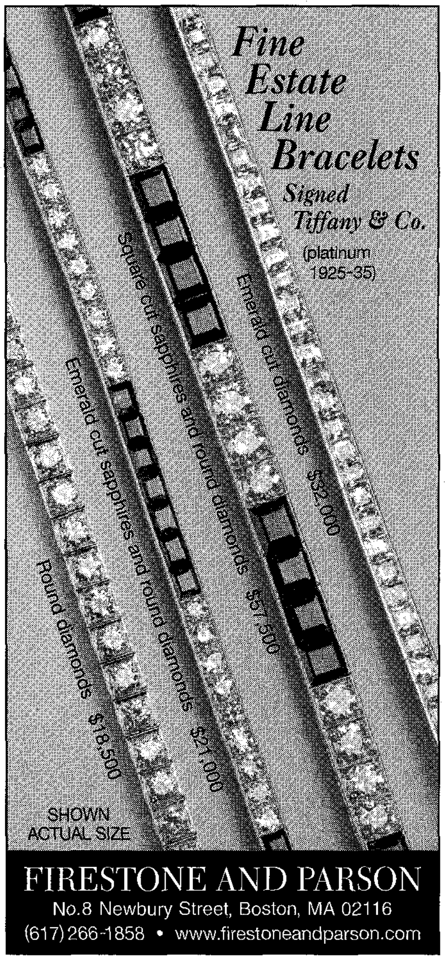
The Mexican director Guillermo del Toro, who made "The Devil's Backbone," digs deeper still into his chosen field of the political horror story. The new movie is set in 1944 in a rural Spanish backwater, where Ofelia (Ivana Baquero), a young girl of unnerving poise, travels to meet her new stepfather (Sergi López), who commands a military outpost. One question posed by the film is: who is the monster here? Is it the stepfather, with his creaking gloves and his savage treatment of local republican troublemakers? Could it be Franco, who has brought the country to

THE QUEEN

Stephen Frears's film considers the deadlock, both grieving and comical, that followed the death of the Princess of Wales in 1997. On the one hand, the Queen (Helen Mirren), believing it to be a private matter, stays and broods in Scotland with the Duke of Edinburgh (James Cromwell) and Prince Charles (Alex Jennings). On the other hand, Tony Blair (Michael Sheen), sensing a thirst for public mourning and thus a unique political opportunity, urges Her Majesty to return to London and face down the mob. And so she does; the crux of the drama comes when Mirren turns to the crowd outside Buckingham Palace and, with one smile, quashes any prospect of rebellion. The script, by Peter Morgan, relies largely on well-grounded speculation, and sticklers for accuracy will find the whole thing straying beyond belief; but, thanks to the careful performances, you subscribe all too readily to the movie's suggestion of a divided land—of a Britain caught between the trustworthy stiffness of tradition and a liberalism that is open not just to emotional honesty but to the coarseness of modern excess. With Helen McCrory as a distinctly unceremonious Cherie Blair.—*A.L.* (10/9/06) (In wide release.)

THE SITUATION

Philip Haas's film, written by Wendell Steavenson, is among the first dramas to tackle the subject of Iraq—the first of many, one presumes. Connie Nielsen plays an American journalist (not a very smart one, to be honest) pursuing a story in Samarra, where two local boys have been thrown off a bridge. Later, working with a quiet photographer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named Zaid (Mido Hamada), she switches her attention to the death of a contact and winds up in the midst of a firefight between U.S. troops and forces loyal to a terrorist leader. Each of these story lines exerts a plausible grip, yet taken together, as Haas skips back and forth between them, they weaken the force of the film; more enduring, if also more dismaying, are the scenes with Dan Murphy (Damian Lewis), an intelligence officer based in Baghdad, who understands the need to work with "moderate insurgents." The moral compromises involved suit Haas's cautious, delicate style more than the combat scenes do; the whole movie leaves a whiff of disappointment and waste. With the excellent Mahmoud El Lozy as a smiling Ba'athist, seeking a way out.—*A.L.* (2/5/07) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

SMOKIN' ACES

A put-on thriller made in a spirit of rabid, itchy, crack-den heartlessness—screw-you nihilism as a joke. Joe Carnahan, the writer-director, sets up a simple situation: every killer in the country—gay neo-Nazis with masks and horns, professional assassins who bite off their own fingertips—is converging on Lake Tahoe to whack Buddy (Aces) Israel (Jeremy Piven), a popular night-club magician whom the Mafia wants dead (the reward: one million dollars). The movie is a scuzz-bag jamboree. What do you do with all these superfluous characters? You kill them off in freaky ways. "Smokin' Aces" has been made with the kind of extreme violence and antic slovenliness that wins a movie the honorific label of "black comedy." But the only comedy lies in the filmmakers' delusion that they have become mean hipsters pushing through old barriers and joyriding into realms of undreamed-of freedom. Tarantino and others have been there before.—*D.D.* (1/29/07) (In wide release.)

WHAT IS IT?

Under this Prufrockian rubric, the actor Crispin Glover, billing himself as Crispin Hellion Glover as if to assert his directorial dalliance with the netherworld, films people with Down's syndrome torturing snails and alternately fighting and embracing each other, along with a middle-aged man with cerebral palsy being masturbated by a woman among several wearing ape suits in a pseudo-Dantesque inferno presided over by Glover himself. Glover seems to be spitting at his Hollywood work and offering this undisciplined potty show as true art—yet without his celebrity and his wealth, this vanity project would in all likelihood never have been made or shown.—*R.B.* (IFC Center; Feb. 9-11.)

Also Playing

BECAUSE I SAID SO: In wide release. **CATCH AND RELEASE:** In wide release. **FACTORY GIRL:** In wide release. **FREEDOM WRITERS:** In wide release. **MAFIOSO:** Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. **THE MESSENGERS:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—In revival. Feb. 7-8 at 7 and 9: "The Pied Piper" (1972, Jacques Demy). ♦ "NewFilmmakers Presents." Feb. 7 at 8:45: "Manhattan, Kansas" (2005, Tara Wray). ♦ Films from Wallace Berman and the Semina Circle. Feb. 8 at 8: "Aleph" (1958-76, Berman) and short films, accompanied by a live musical performance by John Zorn and others. ♦ Feb. 9 at 8: "Tarzan and Jane Regained . . . Sort Of" (1963, Andy Warhol) and "My Home Movies" (1964, Taylor Mead), introduced by Mead. ♦ Feb. 10 at 6: Short films by Lawrence Jordan. ♦ Feb. 10 at 8: Short films by Bruce Conner, Stan Brakhage, Russell Tamblyn, and Jonas Mekas. ♦ Feb. 11 at 6: Short films, including "Scotch Hop" (1959, Christopher Maclaine). ♦ Feb. 11 at 8: "The Subterraneans" (1960, Ranald MacDougall) and "Beat" (1958, Maclaine). ♦ In première. Feb. 9 and Feb. 12-13 at 7 and 9 and Feb. 10-11 at 5, 7, and 9: "Notes on Marie Menken" (2006, Martina Kudlácek). ♦ The films of Suki Hawley and Michael Galinsky. Feb. 13 at 7: "Half-Cocked" (†). ♦ Feb. 13 at 8:45: "Radiation" (1998). The screenings will be preceded by a slide show at 6:30 and followed by a Q. & A. with the directors.

Eddie Murphy stars in multiple roles in "Norbit."

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through Feb. 22: Films scored by Ennio Morricone. Except where noted, all films are in Italian. Feb. 7 at 2, 5:40, and 9:20: "Navajo Joe" (1966, Sergio Corbucci). ♦ Feb. 7 at 3:50 and 7:30: "A Fistful of Dollars" (1964, Sergio Leone; in Italian, English, and Spanish). ♦ Feb. 8 at 1:30, 5:25, and 9:20: "A Quiet Place in the Country" (1969, Elio Petri). ♦ Feb. 8 at 3:30 and 7:25: "Four Flies on Grey Velvet" (1972, Dario Argento). ♦ Feb. 9-10 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Battle of Algiers" (1966, Gillo Pontecorvo; in Arabic and French). ♦ Feb. 11 at 1:10, 3:40, 7, and 9:30: "Burn!" (1969, Pontecorvo; in English). ♦ Feb. 12 at 1:20, 5:25, and 9:30: "The Witches" (1967, Vittorio de Sica, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Franco Rossi, Luchino Visconti, and Mauro Bolognini). ♦ Feb. 12 at 3:20 and 7:25: "Revolver" (1973, Sergio Sollima). ♦ Feb. 13 at 1, 5:20, and 9:40: "The Big Gundown" (1966, Sollima). ♦ Feb. 13 at 3:10 and 7:30: "Death Rides a Horse" (1967, Giulio Petroni).

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—In première. Feb. 9 at 7: "Là-Bas" (†), followed by a discussion with the director, Chantal Akerman, and the curator Lynne Cooke. ♦ Feb. 10 from noon to 5: "A Voice in the Desert," a video installation by Akerman. ♦ Through Feb. 27: The films of Jean-Pierre Léaud. Feb. 13 at 12:30 and 6:30: "The 400 Blows" (1959, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Feb. 13 at 4 and 9: "Two English Girls" (1971, Truffaut).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—In revival. Feb. 9-11 at noon: "Fires on the Plain" (1959, Kon Ichikawa; in Japanese). ♦ Special screenings. Feb. 9-11 at 7:30: "What Is It?" (†), preceded by a dramatic recitation by the director, Crispin Glover, and followed by a Q. & A. and book signing. ♦ "Waverly Midnights." Feb. 9-10 at midnight: "El Topo" (1970, Alejandro Jodorowsky; in Spanish). ♦ Films from NewFest. Feb. 12 at 7: "Long-Term Relationship" (2006, Rob Williams) and "Latch Key" (2006, Garth Bardsley).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Still Moving," films from the museum's collections. Feb. 7 at 4:30: "The Squaw Man" (1914, Cecil B. De Mille and Oscar C. Apfel; silent). ♦ Films scored by Ennio Morricone. Feb. 7 at 6:15: "Once Upon a Time in America" (1984, Sergio Leone). ♦ Through March 2: "Documentary Fortnight Expanded." Feb. 7 at 6:15: "A Map with Gaps" (2006, Alice Nelson) and "In Search of Happiness" (2005, Alexander Gutman; in Russian). ♦ Feb. 4 at 5:45: "The Pipeline Next Door" (2005, Nino Kirtadze; in English, Georgian, and Russian). ♦ Feb. 7 at 8 and Feb. 9 at 7: "Pavlov's Dogs" (2005, Arto Halonen; in Russian), introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 8 at 6: "Sonia" (2006, Lucy Kostelanetz). ♦ Feb. 9 at 6: "Jack Levine: Feast of Pure Reason" (1989, David Sutherland), introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 10 at 2: "The Farmer's Wife" (1998, Sutherland), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ Feb. 11 at 1:30: "Country Boys" (2005, Sutherland), followed by a discussion with the director. ♦ Feb. 12 at 6: "Kabul Ping Pong" (2005, Bodil Furu and Beate Petersen), introduced by Furu. ♦ Feb. 12 at 7: "37 Uses for a Dead Sheep" (2006, Ben Hopkins), followed by a discussion with Kathy Brew and Elaine Charnov, co-directors of the Margaret Mead Film and Video Festival. ♦ Special screenings. Feb. 8 at 6: "My Dinner with Andre" (1981, Louis Malle). ♦ Feb. 8 at 8:30: "Shaft" (1971, Gordon Parks). ♦ "A View from the Vaults." Feb. 9 at 5:45: "Jezebel" (1939, William Wyler). ♦ Feb. 10 at 1:30: "Gunga Din" (1939, George Stevens). ♦ Feb. 10 at 3:45: "Anne of Windy Poplars" (1940, Jack Hively). ♦ Feb. 10 at 5:30: "They Drive by Night" (1940, Raoul Walsh). ♦ Feb. 11 at 5: "The Man Who Came to Dinner" (1942, William Keighley). ♦ Feb. 12 at 6: "Action in the North Atlantic" (1943, Lloyd Bacon). ♦ Feb. 12 at 8:30: "The Corn Is Green" (1945, Irving Rapper). ♦ Through Feb. 22: "Frank Beyer: In Memoriam." Feb. 9 at 8 and Feb. 11 at 2: "Jacob the Liar" (1974, Beyer; in German). The Feb. 9 screening will be introduced by Barton Byg. ♦ Feb. 10 at 7:30: "Naked Among Wolves" (1963, Beyer; in German).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Critics Choice: Great Documentaries." Feb. 10 at 2: "General Idi Amin Dada" (1974, Barbet Schroeder), introduced by Andrew Sarris. ♦ Feb. 10 at 4:30: "American Dream" (1991, Barbara Kopple), introduced by Marshall Fine. ♦ Feb. 10 at 7: "Shut Up and Sing" (2006, Kopple), introduced by the director. ♦ Feb. 11 at 1: "The Century of the Self" (2002, Adam Curtis), introduced by Owen Gleiberman. ♦ Feb. 11 at 6: "Our Brand Is Crisis" (2005, Rachel Boynton), introduced by David Edelstein and followed by a discussion with the director.

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—In revival. Feb. 7 at 5:20 and Feb. 8 at 5:10: "Shockproof" (1949, Douglas Sirk). ♦ In première. Feb. 7-13 at 9: "Burning Annie" (2004, Van Flesher).

RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

150 W. 17th St. (212-620-5000, ext. 344)—"Cabaret Cinema." Feb. 9 at 9:30: "Alphaville" (1965, Jean-Luc Godard), introduced by Ian Buruma.

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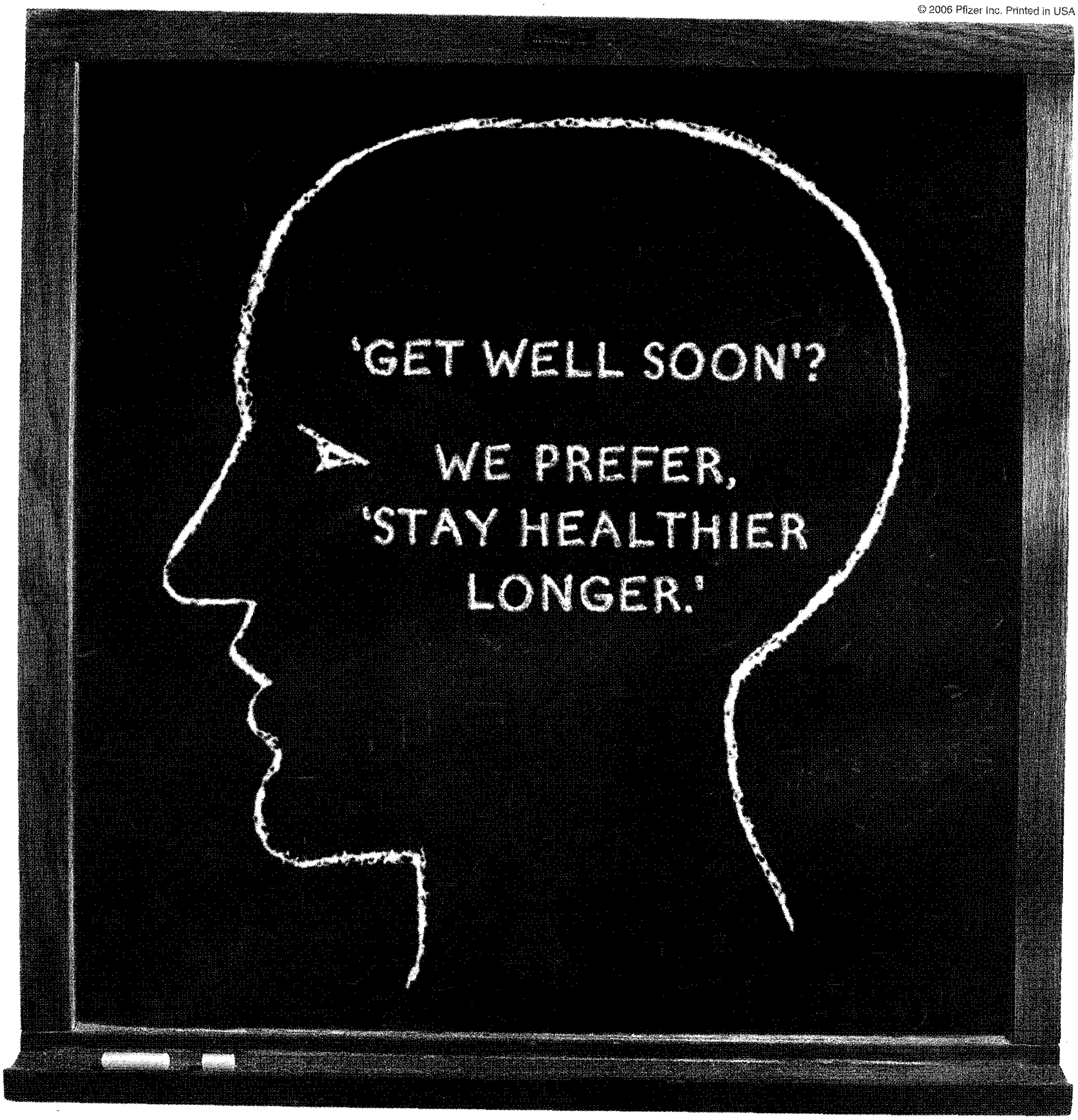

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SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@Midnight." Feb. 9-10: "Wings of Desire" (1987, Wim Wenders; in German, English, and French).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. Feb. 11 at 5:45 and Feb. 13 at 6:45: "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey) and "Horse Feathers" (1932, Norman Z. McLeod).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—The films of Donald Cammell. Feb. 8 at 3:30, Feb. 9 at 6:15, Feb. 10 at 3:15 and 8:15, and Feb. 11 at 5:15: "Performance" (1970) and "Lucifer Rising" (1972, Kenneth Anger). ♦ Feb. 9 at 4, Feb. 10 at 6, and Feb. 11 at 8: "Wild Side" (1995; director's cut). ♦ Feb. 9 at 9 and Feb. 10 at 1:15: "Demon Seed" (†). ♦ Feb. 11 at 1: "Duffy" (1968, Robert Parrish). ♦ Feb. 11 at 3: "White of the Eye" (1987).

READINGS AND TALKS

FRENCH INSTITUTE ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE
Hazel Rowley, the author of "Tête-à-Tête: Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre," talks about writing, passion, and sexual freedom with Fabrice Rozié, a playwright whose work includes "Transatlantic Liaison," a play about Beauvoir's love affair with the American writer Nelson Algren. The poet Honor Moore is the moderator. (55 E. 59th St. 212-307-4100. Feb. 8 at 7.)

"POETRY IN THE PRESENCE OF SCULPTURE"
Poets House, a library and literary center currently situated in SoHo, sends the poets Brenda Iijima, Jill Magi, Sawako Nakayasu, and Srikanth Reddy to the Noguchi Museum, in Long Island City. (9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Queens. Tickets at the door. Feb. 11 at 3.)

CORY BOOKER
The committed young mayor of Newark talks about the national implications of his work there. (The New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-229-5488. Feb. 12 at 6.)

SHARON MARCUS
Marcus, an academic and the author of "Between Women: Friendship, Desire, and Marriage in Victorian England," discusses her work. (Three Lives & Company, 154 W. 10th St. No tickets necessary. Feb. 13 at 7.)

"THE STRAY DOG CABARET"
This past December, *The New York Review of Books* published a collection of work, translated by the late Paul Schmidt, by Vladimir Mayakovsky, Osip Mandelstam, Anna Akhmatova, Marina Tsvetaeva, Boris Pasternak, and other Russian poets who frequented the St. Petersburg *boîte* of the same name in the early twentieth century. On Feb. 13 at 7:30, a number of contemporary poets—including Linda Gregg, Eileen Myles, Timothy Donnelly, and Glyn Maxwell—portray the poets in a dramatic reading, accompanied by music. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., at 25th St. 212-279-4200.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"MOBY-DICK: THE SERMON"
Before Melville's novel even gets to the sea, Ishmael finds himself in church in New Bedford, Massachusetts, listening to Father Mapple, a former harpooner and sailor, who, after climbing a ship's rope ladder to his pulpit, delivers a fiery sermon about Jonah and the whale. For the past few months, on Saturday nights inside the chapel in Green-Wood Cemetery, the actor Richard Kirkwood has been treating present-day New Yorkers to a resounding rendition of the sermon. (Fifth Ave. at 25th St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-857-4816. Feb. 10, starting at 7:30, and the second and third Saturdays of each month.)

HOT DOGS
More than a hundred and sixty-five breeds and varieties of canines—including Labrador retrievers, collies, dachshunds, and affenpinschers—compete for honors at the Westminster Kennel Club's annual dog show. (Madison Square Garden. 212-307-7171. Feb. 12-13.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
Paintings of the forebears of the infinitely well-bred and exceedingly well-groomed pooches who will be attending the Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show next week are on view at **Doyle's** annual "Dogs in Art" auction (Feb. 13), timed to attract the canine connoisseurs who are descending on the city. The sale is preceded by an auction of decorative objects from the Belle Époque (Feb. 7). (175 E. 87th St. 212-427-2730.) ♦ **Christie's** offers a selection of prints and multiples (Feb. 8-9), with a focus on such contemporary artists as Frank Stella, Jasper Johns, and Gerhard Richter. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.) ♦ Diamond bracelets and colored stones grace **Sotheby's** auction of "arcade" jewels (Feb. 7), followed by an offering of wines (Feb. 10) that features a hearty selection of Bordeaux. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
CRÈME DE LA CRÈME
Feb. 14-27

Walter Reade Theatre offers a roundup of works from the 2006 international festival circuit, chosen by editors and contributors to *Film Comment*, including the last film by Jean-Marie Straub and the late Danièle Huillet, "These Encounters of Theirs," Pedro Costa's austere epic from the slums of Lisbon, "Colossal Youth," and "The Yacoubian Building," Marwan Hamed's audacious panorama of life in modern Cairo. (212-875-5600.)

ART
DECONSTRUCTION
Feb. 22-June 7

Gordon Matta-Clark (1943-78), who trained as an architect, became famous for taking buildings apart; a series of works from the seventies involved sawing and jackhammering entire houses into neat squares or rectangles. A retrospective at the Whitney examines his career. (800-944-8639.)

DANCE
LOVE AND LOSS
March 2-18

The Paul Taylor Dance Company returns to City Center with a New York première—Taylor's lighthearted take on Shakespeare's "Troilus and Cressida"—and an introspective new work, "Lines of Loss," set to music ranging from Machaut to John Cage. (212-581-1212.)

THE THEATRE
ANCHORS AWEIGH
March 6

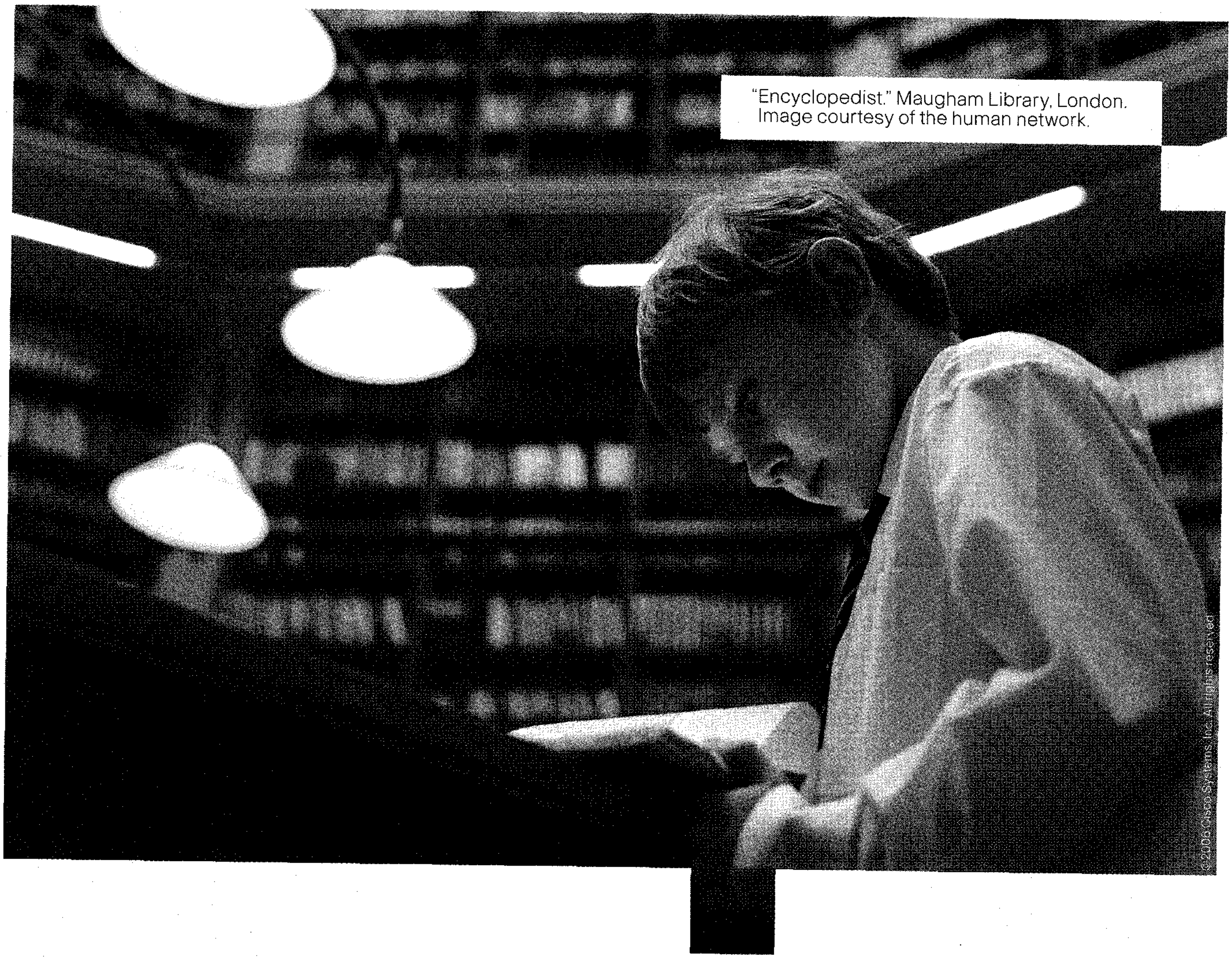
Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg, the team behind "Les Misérables" and "Miss Saigon," have written a new musical epic, "The Pirate Queen," about the life, loves, and high-seas adventures of the sixteenth-century Irish chieftain Grace O'Malley. (212-307-4100.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
HOUSE BLEND
March 17

If anyone can make the crossover genre work, it's the mandolin player Chris Thile, whose virtuosity—both as a member of Nickel Creek and as a soloist—enlivens everything from Bach to bluegrass. His new forty-minute quintet for string band with voice will be a highlight of John Adams's "In Your Ear Redux" festival at Zankel Hall. (212-247-7800.)

A retrospective of the architecture-themed art work of Gordon Matta-Clark, at the Whitney.

RICCARDO VECCHIO



"Encyclopedist." Maugham Library, London.
Image courtesy of the human network.

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THE ICONIC DESIGN FEATURES SIDE WINDOWS WITH NO B-PILLARS INTERRUPTING THE VIEW, YET HAS THE STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY OF A TRADITIONAL COUPE. AND IT'S JUST ONE OF THIS VEHICLE'S MANY ENGINEERING WONDERS.

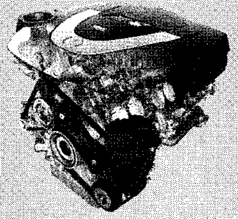

fig. A

This year, the newly redesigned 2007 CL-Class leaps from where its storied predecessors left off.

Racing-inspired 8- and 12-cylinder powerplants boast engine blocks made from lightweight cast aluminum and silicon-lined cylinders that reduce friction by 50%. The CL 550's 7-speed automatic transmission turns road-devouring power into instantaneous acceleration upon demand, with outstanding efficiency.

Now, a sports coupe should be more than just powerful. That's why CL coupes are equipped with Active Body Control—an intelligent system that carries on a continuous conversation with the suspension, adjusting it for a ride best described as firm, fierce and masterful.

And because safety can never come second, the CL-Class also offers Mercedes-Benz PRE-SAFE.® This integrated safety system helps prepare the vehicle in the critical moments before a potential accident, for instance moving the front passenger's seat to a more favorable position, as well as closing the windows and sunroof should a rollover be imminent.

Then there are the available creature comforts—the Parktronic system, 14-way power-adjustable massaging seats, voice-activated audio, telecommunications and navigation systems, as well as the infrared Night View Assist system, to name but a few.

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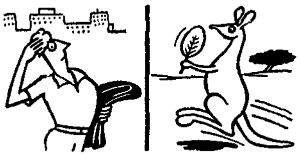
THE
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
HOT TOPIC



Except in certain benighted precincts—oil-industry-funded Web sites, the Bush White House, Michael Crichton's den—no one wastes much energy these days trying to deny global warming. Credit Al Gore's documentary, "An Inconvenient Truth," or this winter's snowless ski season in the Alps, or the fact that it was seventy-two degrees in Central Park on January 6th. Still, the release last week of the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change represents an important, perhaps even historic, event.

Founded in 1988, the I.P.C.C. is a joint venture of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization. Every four or five years, it conducts an exhaustive survey of the available data and issues a multi-volume assessment of the state of the climate. By the time the I.P.C.C. publishes an assessment, it has been vetted by thousands of scientists, as well as by the organization's hundred and ninety-odd participating governments. The process guarantees that I.P.C.C. reports are conservative—indeed, frequently out of date—since every statement has had to pass review not just in Paris and London but also in Riyadh and Washington. The first I.P.C.C. assessment, issued in 1990, was noncommittal on the source of the warming that had been observed up to that point. In each subsequent report, the organization has moved cautiously but inexorably toward assigning responsibility. Last week's assessment, the fourth, put the likelihood that human beings are the cause of global warming—now evident from "increases in global average air and ocean temperatures, widespread melting of snow and ice, and rising global mean sea level"—at ninety per cent. It went on to note that temperatures will continue to climb for decades, that heat waves and floods will become more frequent, and that the last time the Arctic and the Antarctic were warmer than they are today for an extended period—before the start of the last Ice Age—global sea levels were at least thirteen feet higher.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

As it happens, the release of the report coincides with an important political shift. Though President Bush remains recalcitrant—he could barely bring himself to utter the phrase "climate change" in his State of the Union address last month—the Republican defeat in November has removed from power Congress's most reliable obstructionists. In the Senate, James Inhofe, of Oklahoma, best known for having declared global warming the "greatest hoax ever perpetrated on the American people," ceded the chairmanship of the Environment and Public Works Committee to Barbara Boxer, of California. "For the last twelve years . . . all we've been talking about is, 'Is there global warming?' " Boxer recently told *USA Today*. "I'm over it. We need to move forward." Boxer herself has signed on to a bill, sponsored by Senator Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, that would cut America's carbon emissions by eighty per cent by 2050. Last week, when she held an unusual "open-mike" hearing to review legislative proposals on climate change, twenty-five senators showed up, including the Presidential hopefuls John McCain, Hillary Clinton, and Barack Obama. (McCain, Obama, and Joseph Lieberman are co-sponsors of a bill that would cut greenhouse-gas emissions by two-thirds by 2050.) After

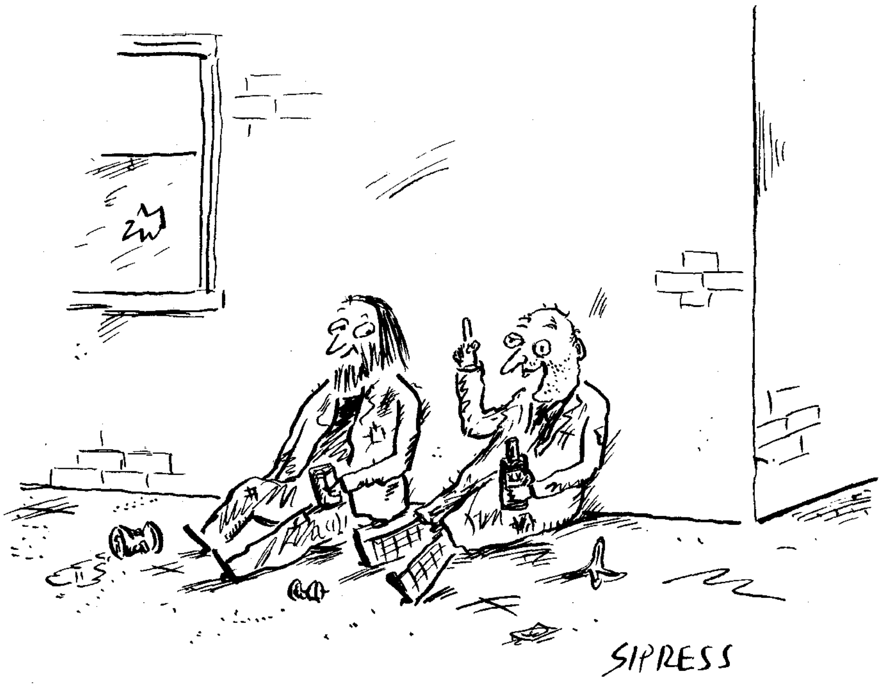
Inhofe used his time to rail about all the "hysteria and political posturing" on global warming, Boxer remarked, "I'll put you down as skeptical."

On the House side, the Democratic majority has elevated Representative John Dingell, of Michigan, to the chairmanship of the Energy and Commerce Committee. Dingell assumes the post from Joe Barton, of Texas, whose tenure was marked by a series of investigations (or, if you prefer, witch hunts) targeting prominent climate scientists. Now eighty, Dingell has spent more than half a century in Congress protecting the American auto industry. Nevertheless, he has promised to hold hearings on climate change, and has invited Al Gore to testify. Meanwhile, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has gone a step further, creating a Select Committee on Energy Independence and Global Warming, reportedly to be headed by Representative Ed Markey, of Massachusetts. "The science of global warming and its impact is overwhelming and unequivocal," Pelosi said, announcing the committee's formation last month. "Now is time to act."

Almost as significant as the changes taking place inside Congress are those taking place outside it. Four days after Pelosi labelled the science of global warming "unequivocal," James Rogers, the chairman of Duke Energy, one of the nation's largest electric-power companies, said much the same thing at the National Press Club. Duke Energy is part of a new coalition, the U.S. Climate Action Partnership, whose members include Alcoa, DuPont, G.E., and Lehman Brothers, along with groups like the Natural Resources Defense Council and the World Resources Institute. At the press club, the coalition called on the federal government to enact a mandatory "cap and trade" system that would first stabilize and then begin to reduce CO_2 emissions. "We know enough to act now," Rogers said. "We must act now." The coalition urged Congress to set a goal of cutting emissions by at least sixty per cent by mid-century.

Carbon dioxide is a by-product of just about every aspect of contemporary life—from driving and flying to farming and manufacturing and watching videos on YouTube. To reduce emissions by sixty per cent—or eighty per cent, as Senator Boxer advocates, or by two-thirds, as the McCain-Lieberman-Obama bill calls for—will thus require significant, and doubtless also disruptive, changes at every level of society. This may not seem an attractive prospect, but, as the latest I.P.C.C. report makes clear, change is not something that anyone at this point has a choice about. All that is at issue—and it is critically at issue—is how disastrous the change will be. Already enough CO_2 has been pumped into the air to alter life on earth for thousands of years to come. To continue on our current path because the alternative seems like too much effort is not just shortsighted. It's suicidal.

—*Elizabeth Kolbert*



"Then, I thought, Hey, hold on a minute—maybe failure is an option."

INTERVENTION
APARTMENT S.O.S.

When Antonio del Rosario, the managing director and executive vice-president of Barak Realty, remembers the golden era of real-estate sales—the spring of 2005—he does so with a mixture of nostalgia and astonishment. "Even if you had farm animals and feces in the apartment, you could sell it at or above asking and have a bidding war," he said the other evening at a cocktail party in Tribeca. "Now you get below asking if it's not staged right."

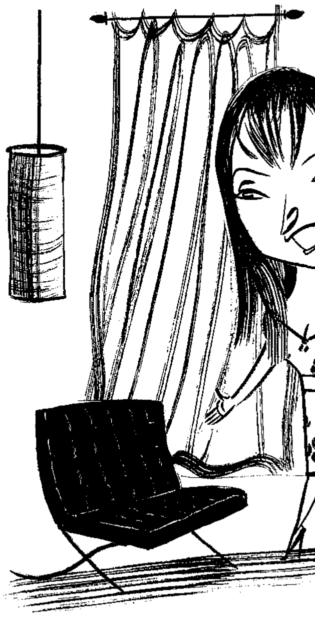
Learning about staging—dressing up an apartment so that it looks unfit for human habitation, but in a good way—was the purpose of the cocktail party, which took place in a loft that, having been vacated by its owners in advance of an anticipated sale, had been staged for the benefit of open-house browsers. In the living room, a pair of buttery suède sofas faced each other over a coffee table, upon which copies of two "Olivia" books and a catalogue of Leonardo's drawings had been casually strewn. In the master bedroom, a quilted throw was tossed on an all-white-linen bed, and floaty white drapes had been artfully hung at the windows, disguising the room's brick-wall-facing northern exposure. In the master bathroom, a white sheepskin rug had been slung over the edge of the sunken tub, looking rather like an albino sloth making its way to a watering hole.

This pseudo-home had been conjured by Jill Vegas, a thirty-five-year-old former advertising drone with bleached-blond bangs, who was circulating through the room wearing high heels and a leopard-print dress. "This is all from my inventory—I have seven hundred and fifty pieces," she said, gesturing toward the white Barcelona chair in the bedroom. The apartment had been on the market, empty, for four months before she gave it the once-over: accenting side tables with books by her favorite authors (a John Updike collection, with elephant tchotchke atop), and hanging art on the walls. "This isn't an apartment that most artists can afford, but these things bring in some of the character of the neighborhood," she said. The garden gnome that squatted between chaises on the roof deck was also her addition.

Thirty-odd real-estate people sipped wine (choices were limited to non-staining Chardonnay and Pinot Grigio), while Vegas gave a presentation demonstrating her craft. She had gone into the staging business, she explained, after a neighbor, one weekend, threw herself out the window. "It was really awful, and I really felt, like, her presence," Vegas said. "On Monday, I told my husband, 'We're moving. I didn't come to New York to have this. It's too depressing.' " Vegas's apartment, with a Chinese-lacquer-red entry hall, sold in one day for a record price. "The broker said to me, 'Have you ever heard of staging? It's when you make apartments look good and they sell for more,' " she recalled. "But I don't like the word 'staging.' What I like to do is add authenticity and soul to a space."

Vegas showed before-and-after photographs of her projects to the assembled. One apartment was the home of a violinist with the New York Philharmonic. "He had sheet music everywhere," she said with a moue. "They lived here forty years, and they never threw anything away. We emptied it out and painted it and sold it for over asking price. The wife kept calling me up and saying, 'Where's my blah-blah-blah?' I was, like, 'I don't know.' We took what they had and added accents." A shot of the staged kitchen—the table was set with two ceramic bowls containing enormous pink-grapefruit halves—drew approving murmurs. When Vegas showed a photo of a colorful plaid bedspread from another apartment that she had retooled, there were gasps of horror from the brokers. "These people loved this bedspread and were really offended when I told them it had to go," she said. "They were, like, 'We think your stuff sucks,' and I was, like, 'I don't care.' People are, like, 'I don't like this,' and I'm, like, I don't want them to like it—the question is what is the target buyer going to like."

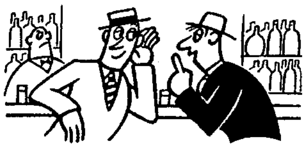
After the presentation, Vegas—who was adopted as a child into a family of Minnesotan born-again Christians and aspired to be a novelist before she went into advertising—reflected on the turn that her career had taken. "That woman killing herself—I feel like in a weird way she gave me a gift," she said. "It's really sad—I am not saying I'm glad she did it. But if she hadn't done that I would be doing something else." Meanwhile, her skills were being sought for another apartment whose occupant was recently deceased. "I have an estate sale, and I'm going to gut it and have Jill come and stage it," Andreas Metzger, a broker at Citi Habitats, said. "If you have an apartment that has been lived in for thirty years and everyone knows that someone died there, they think you're going to give it away. We want it to look like someone began the renovation and then moved on."



Jill Vegas

—*Rebecca Mead*

THE LITERARY LIFE
BOOK 'EM PARTY



Nine years ago, Stanley Alpert was kidnapped at gunpoint after dropping a woman off at her apartment building in the Village. He had met her on the subway, less than an hour before, and on a whim invited her to join him in a cookie-buying mission; he got Entenmann's, she got Chips Ahoy. Then he walked her back to her apartment and asked if she'd like to go out for a cup of tea. She declined—it was late. He asked for her business card, left, and shortly thereafter, as he recalled last week, "I felt a tug at my elbow and there was an automatic machine gun at my gut."

Alpert was blindfolded and held hostage for the next twenty-five hours by a gang of four men and three accomplices. When he informed them that it was his thirty-eighth birthday, they offered him drugs and the services of a teen-age prostitute. (He politely refused both.) Then, remarkably, they turned him loose in Prospect Park. Alpert, who happened to be a federal prosecutor, recounted his ordeal in studied detail, but detectives and F.B.I. agents were initially dubious. Like Alpert's captors, they couldn't believe that a successful thirty-eight-year-old man would be unmarried and asking women on the train out for tea.

Recently, on Alpert's forty-seventh birthday, a number of those detectives and federal agents, along with dozens of old friends, a handful of ex-girlfriends, and the so-called Cookie Lady herself, gathered at an East Village bar called Crime Scene to celebrate the publication of "The Birthday Party: A Memoir of Survival," Alpert's first book. The four kidnappers, who had not known that Alpert was a prosecutor, and who had intended merely to max out his A.T.M. cards, are all now serving time upstate—nearly twenty years apiece. Sam Miller, a twenty-five-year veteran of the N.Y.P.D., addressed the crowd, saying, "Stan was the best witness that I've ever come across—he's the most amazing person I know." Miller's old partner, Larry Riccio, who has retired from the force, clapped Alpert on the back and said, "I'm glad we can laugh about it now." Riccio had been a tea-date skeptic.

Scott Dunn, an assistant U.S. Attorney in Brooklyn, stood on a banquette. "It's a story of suspense," he said. "It's a story that reads like a roller-coaster ride. It's a story of one man's efforts to overcome tremendous obstacles." He paused. "Stan's dating life is what I could be talking about."

Alpert is still unmarried, and for many

SHEEPISH

Charles Roselli set out to discover what makes some sheep gay. Then the news media and the blogosphere got hold of the story.

—*The Times.*

Enough already. I'm Troy, a gay sheep, and I'll tell you the truth. Although I'm conflicted about calling myself a gay sheep, because I don't like to think that my sexuality defines me; let's just say that I'm a sheep who happens to be gay. Being gay is just a simple biological fact, like having a fleecy undercoat or bleating while you're being shorn, or getting aroused whenever you see a bulky turtleneck sweater.

When I was growing up, I assumed that I'd be just like everybody else, and that someday I'd be bred with a ewe and slaughtered. But, of course, those other feelings were always there; even when I was only a few years old I would gaze at another male lamb and think about sharing a stall, with just enough hay and maybe a nice mid-century trough. I tried not to focus on my urges, and whenever my mom caught me rubbing up against the fence post that I called Skipper I'd pretend I had lice. But as the years went by I started to act on my desires, first with Ed, who was a ram, if you know what I mean. Later, I became involved with Rick, a sheep my own age, although after our encounters Rick would always claim that he was drunk on compost, and he'd butt me with his head and insist, "Dude, let's go get us some mutton."

Finally, my dad found me with Rick, and he flew into a blind rage, yelling that he had no son, and that if I was lucky I'd end up as a cheap Peruvian cardigan worn by a truck-stop hooker in Alaska. And so I ran away, and I went wild. I experimented with everyone and everything. Bulls. Mules. Duck, duck, goose. I found out exactly why they're called the Three Little Pigs. Call me Old McDonald, because I had the farm. I even made some adult films, and maybe you've heard of them: "Wet Wool," "Lassie, Come Here," and the mega-selling "Hoof and Mouth." Then, one morning, I woke up next to a horse, a hen, and an ear of corn—that's right, all the food groups. And I was disgusted with myself. What was I, livestock?

And so I re-joined my flock, up on Brokeback. I didn't expect to be accepted; I just needed some time to graze and grow. I had some terrific long talks with a wise old mountain goat, who told me, "Look, you can be anything you want to be—gay, straight, pashmina, whatever." And I found my faith again, when I realized that, hey, there were sheep on the ark. There were sheep in the manger. And at the Last Supper there was stew.

At long last, I found the strength to come out to my family, my friends, and even my co-workers, to say right out loud, I'm Troy and I'm gay, but I hope that isn't the most interesting thing about me. I'm just like you: I like to stand around in the rain and get caught in barbed wire and defecate while I'm asleep. And the amazing thing was—it was no big deal. Everyone nuzzled me, and my mom said that deep down she'd always known, and that she'd hoped that I'd grow up to be an artist or a performer or a cashmere crewneck. Of course, Little Bo Peep, my shepherdess, got a little teary at first. "Are you sure?" she wondered. "I mean, you're so masculine." And I informed her that being gay doesn't mean you have to act like a hummingbird or a Chihuahua. And then she asked, very confidentially, "Is it true about Elsie the cow? And Ellen?" And I just rolled my eyes and said, "Darling."

Right about then is when I met Doug. I saw him across the pasture, and I just knew. I assumed there'd be talk—he's a black sheep. And, I'll confess, I used the oldest line in the barn. I sidled right up to him and I said, "Baa baa, black sheep, have you any wool?" And he looked me right in the eye and murmured, "Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full." And I replied, "I can see that." We've been together ever since, and we don't care what anyone thinks. Because, baby, at the end of the day we're all just animals.

—*Paul Rudnick*

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of the partygoers his bachelor status, rather than, say, the successful prosecution of his kidnappers, seemed the evening's most sensational topic. "People keep asking me, 'Did you really fly out here for this?' " Mike Rosen, who met Alpert in high school, and now lives in Oregon, said. "I keep saying, 'You know, I realize I'm probably never going to have to fly out for his wedding.' "

Over by the beer taps, Alpert's older brother, Joel, who lives in Atlanta and is single himself, flirted with a bartender. "Were you wearing that before?" he asked, referring to a black tank top she had on.

"I got hot," she answered, indicating that she'd removed her outer layer.

"I think you were hot before," he said.

She rolled her eyes and served him a Pilsner. Joel brought up the phone call he'd got from Scott Dunn after Alpert went missing, and how he'd been unconcerned: "I'm thinking, He's getting lucky, that's probably what's going on. It's a reasonable explanation on your birthday."

This year, Alpert was primarily autographing books in the back. Abby and Elinor, a couple of women from his synagogue, talked about him while waiting in line. "He shares a birthday with Sam Cooke and Lord Byron," Elinor said. "I think that's very interesting."

"His father was a cantor, and he's got

a beautiful voice," Abby said. Abby, too, was unmarried, and finding the options at the party wanting.

"Can I point out every single cop in this place?" Elinor asked rhetorically. "It's really easy to tell: mustaches, bad skin, and bad suits."

Soon afterward, a woman wearing a scarf approached Alpert and asked if he remembered her. He was stumped, until she mentioned that she had once worn a pair of his Wile E. Coyote slippers. Her name was Lori. "Stan, do you have a card with you?" she asked. "We need to have a drink."

Alpert gave her his card. Finally, he took a break from signing and sat down to eat some birthday cake. "I would certainly love to get married and have a family," he said. "The life of a writer, actually, is quite isolating. You end up spending a lot of time on your own."

—*Ben McGrath*

POSTSCRIPT
WHITNEY BALLIETT

Whitney Balliett, who died last week at the age of eighty, was above all a poet, who pursued poetry by other means. He wrote for this magazine for almost fifty years, mostly about jazz, and what he wrote was so good that Philip Larkin, not an easy man to please about either jazz or poetry, called him a "master of language," while, years later, the young Nicholson Baker still referred to him, in a wondering aside, as a "tireless prodigy." Whitney was about as pure a stylist as anyone who has written American English, yet his sentences were almost always about someone else's art; that's what gave his writing its modesty and its tensile strength. Reading through the books he made from pieces published here—"American Singers," "American Musicians"—one is grateful for their range of reference and their near-encyclopedic knowledge of the music, but what delights and amazes is the quality of his line, what William Shawn, the former editor of this magazine, once called his "genius for saying in words how a particular musician or musicians sound." Whitney could place on the page the sound of someone playing—not the reasons the sound might matter to a historian, or even the way it felt to an enthusiast, but the way it really sounded, the way it was. This, for instance, on the tenor man Ben Webster, from a late collection:

> He would start a medium-slow blues solo very softly with a weaving five-note phrase, pause, play a high, barely audible blue note, and duck back to his opening phrase, still as soft as first sunlight. He would harden his tone slightly at the start of his next chorus, issue an annunciatory phrase, repeat it, insert a defiant tremolo. . . . His tone would grow hard, he would growl and crowd his notes, he would shake his phrases as if he had them clamped in his teeth. . . . As the years went by . . . he would close certain phrase endings by allowing his vibrato to melt into pure undulating breath—dramatically offering, before the breath expired, the ghost of his sound.

There is Webster, compleat. And Balliett could do it over and over. (In an entirely different piece about Webster, he mentioned that his solos "give one the impression of being suddenly picked up by a breaker and carried smoothly to shore.") Someone once said, disparagingly, of another writer that he heard with his typewriter; Balliett wrote with his ears.

Or he seemed to; only on second reading does one see how artfully constructed the writing is—the startling, yet just right adjectives, the vivid and almost always slightly comic verbs, the feeling for what's essential, the exactitude, and the one fine metaphor to end it all. Lovers of Balliett's writing would collect his epithets like autographs: the "vinegary, dissonant, gothic" tone of Monk; the "rippling, quiet-water" quality of Ellis Larkins; the "great, welcoming tone" and "almost discursive vibrato" of Coleman Hawkins. (You could make a style of your own just by stealing some of his pet adjectives: owlish, transparent, weightless.)

He could be very funny, too: some readers still recall his extended-metaphorical description of a late Miles Davis concert as an outtake from "Apocalypse Now," or the way he explained how the drummer Buddy Rich, instead of keeping time for his band, "pushed it before him, like a man throwing someone out of his house."

The voice he perfected on the page sounded so enviably and entirely New York—"sophisticated," "urbane," and even "suave" (to use three words he avoided)—that it was a surprise to discover, in life, a man more inward and recessive, with a shy, refined diffidence. "You're the Waspiest guy I ever met," Jackie Mason said to him, when Balliett was working on a Profile of the comedian. (As a sideline, or second instrument, he wrote nearly a hundred Profiles and book reviews for the magazine, the best of them wonderful studies of comedians like Mason and Bob and Ray.) Whitney *was* a Waspy guy, or seemed so—often bow-tied, always immaculate—whose gentle presence stood at a slight remove from his work. He knew his own value, but he was almost without vanity, answering every letter sent to him, and always encouraging younger writers. He was a family man, who delighted in the work of his adored second wife, the painter Nancy Balliett, and he died with his five children and many grandchildren nearby.

As the music he loved aged, he was often left without a subject, and those of us who revered his writing sometimes wished that he could have discovered in himself a more sympathetic ear for the sounds of newer jazz. But he was too honest to pretend to admire what he didn't, and it was the great American music of the twenties through the eighties (the seventies, a jazz Indian summer in New York, were a high-water mark for him) that remained his subject. In his work, along with the writerly gifts, there is also a vision of what art should be—an entire aesthetic. He saluted and admired the self-conscious greats, Armstrong and Ellington above all, loved stars (he wrote keenly about Sinatra and Tony Bennett), and appreciated innovators (he wrote early and well about Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman). But his heart and his soul were with the artisan-poets of jazz, the late-night pianists and unsung singers, the long line of jazzmen and women who "piece out their lives in the shadows and shoals of show business" and keep alive the music's lyric heart. Gene Bertoncini and Tommy Flanagan, Bill Coleman and Anita Ellis, Zoot Sims and Joe Venuti and Big Sid Catlett (Balliett played drums, and that great drummer may have been his God)—he believed in the swinging, witty sounds they made, and kept a faith, both mystical and defiant, that their work mattered as much as that of any novelist or painter, that the air they set vibrating in a room somewhere at night would go on resonating long after the room was gone. He made sure that it did. Delicate poets of deep emotion, he preserved their sound, and ended as one of them.

—*Adam Gopnik*

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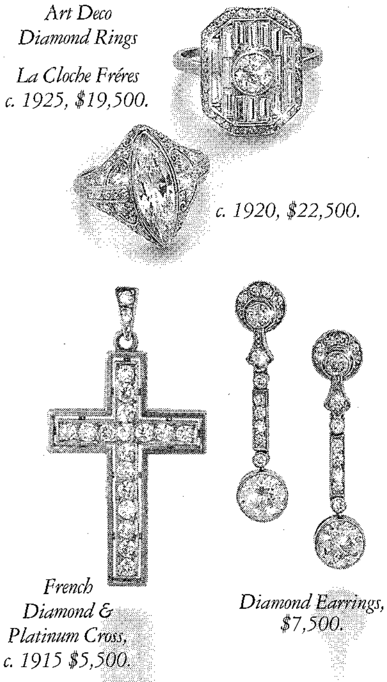

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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

THE LORAX

How Joe Lieberman sees himself.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

Hillary Rodham Clinton, like many capable politicians, has the ability to arrange her face in such a way as to convey nothing but placidity and benign pity when confronted by a hostile or unpleasant comment. On occasion, though, when her benevolence or, worse, her honor is questioned, her facial muscles tighten, her lips purse, and her eyes seem to darken. Such was the case at a hearing of the Senate Armed Services Committee in late January, when Senator Joseph Lieberman, of Connecticut, the committee's army of one—he is the last self-identified Democrat in Congress, and perhaps in America, to express admiration for George W. Bush's course in Iraq—accused his colleagues (and not only Democrats but those Republicans who are irresolute in their support for the President) of providing encouragement to America's enemies.

The purpose of the committee meeting was to consider the nomination of Lieutenant General David Petraeus as commander of the ever-more American multinational force in Iraq, but Petraeus was marginal to the proceedings. The real cause of the cross-party and intra-party squabbling was a nonbinding resolution stating that President Bush's plan to send more soldiers to Iraq was "not in the national interest." Lieberman opposed the resolution, as did most Republicans. For the senators on the committee who would like to succeed President Bush—Clinton and the ranking Republican, John McCain—the hearing could also be understood as campaigning by other means. Clinton, for example, had been using it to help the electorate forget that she initially endorsed the invasion.

The Iraq war has upended the Senate, as it has all politics. Previously stubborn hawks among the Republicans have become critics of Bush's war plans. John Warner, one of the committee members, has begun invoking Vietnam when talking about Iraq. His colleague Chuck Hagel, of Nebraska, a Vietnam veteran and a possible Presidential candidate, has become an apostate among many Republicans for his attacks on the President, whose new plan for Iraq he called a "blunder."

Then, of course, there is Lieberman. He was the lead Democratic co-sponsor of the 2002 Senate resolution authorizing the war, and seems to have had no second thoughts. Indeed, it is difficult to locate a Republican who is quite as sunny about Iraq's future as Joe Lieberman is. Even McCain, who supports the President's new plan, is openly frustrated with the Administration's prosecution of the war, and has been especially critical of Vice-President Dick Cheney; Lieberman won't criticize anyone involved but the comprehensively discredited former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld.

Iraq is the reason that Lieberman calls himself an "independent Democrat." Democratic voters in Connecticut abandoned him in last year's primary, favoring the antiwar candidate Ned Lamont. Lieberman ran as an independent, and beat the ineffectual Lamont in the general election in large part because Republicans voted for him. In the campaign, Lieberman said that he would join the Democratic caucus if elected, and his victory was the deciding one that gave the Democrats control of the Senate. But he told me recently that his attachment to the Party is based in some measure on sentiment, and should not necessarily be thought of as eternal.

"A lot of Democrats are essentially pacifists and somewhat isolationist," he told me. He had particular problems with Senator Edward Kennedy's proposal to deny the President funding for a troop surge, and with an idea recently raised by the senior senator from Connecticut, Christopher Dodd, to cap the number of American soldiers in Iraq. Lieberman was not willing to say whether he would remain a Democrat if the Party cut off funding for the war. "That would be stunning to me," he said. "And very hurtful. And I'd be deeply affected by it. Let's put it that way."

Lieberman's Democratic colleagues know that if he switched parties they would lose their majority, and so they tend to indulge him, unless they are speaking to reporters off the record. Even when Lieberman defends Bush, which is often, his colleagues avoid criticizing him in public—except when it becomes a bit too much, as it did, apparently, for Hillary Clinton.

Lieberman, after reviewing Petraeus's testimony, said, "You have also said that you fear that there would be disastrous consequences for Iraq, for the region, for the world economy, for the United States in the war on terrorism if we exit Iraq prematurely."

"Correct, sir," the General replied.

Lieberman asked what effect the resolution would have "on our enemies in Iraq."

Petraeus said that, as a soldier, he had put himself "in harm's way" to protect the right to free speech, but added, "A commander in such an endeavor would obviously like the enemy to feel that there's no hope."

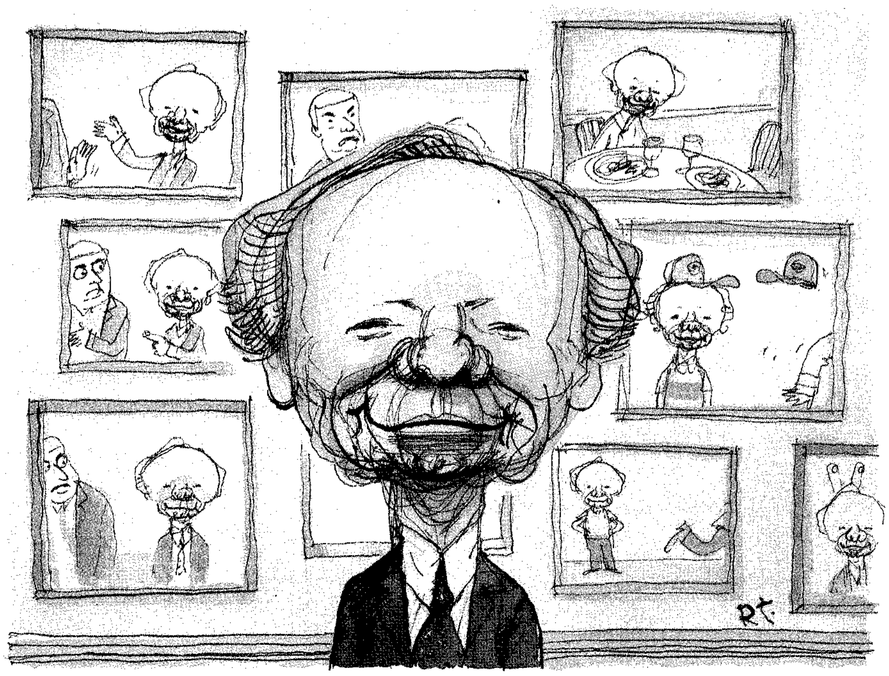
Lieberman, fortified by this response, said, "A Senate-passed resolution of disapproval for this new strategy in Iraq would give the enemy some encouragement, some feeling that—well, some clear expression that the American people were divided."

"That's correct, sir," Petraeus said.

In that case, Lieberman said, he would "make a plea" to his colleagues on Petraeus's behalf to defeat it. "If, God forbid, you are unable to succeed, then there will be plenty of time for the resolutions of disapproval."

As Lieberman spoke, Clinton's mask of equanimity seemed to slip for a moment, until she could assimilate the idea that Lieberman had, in essence, accused the Democratic Party of encouraging America's enemies.

When it was her turn to respond, Clinton spoke with heat: "I very sincerely but wholeheartedly disagree with those who are trying to once again up the rhetoric about our position in Iraq instead of taking a hard look about what will actually, on the ground, change the behavior and actions of this Iraqi government." What she wanted, she said, was "to send a very clear message to the Iraqi government that they cannot rely on the blood and treasure of America any longer."



Lieberman clearly believes that he owes his party nothing. At times, he feels isolated.

RICHARD THOMPSON

Then she delivered a polite rebuke to Lieberman, saying that she rejected the idea put forward by her "friends on the panel who think that statements of disapproval are somehow going to undermine our effort, when I think they will send the clearest message." (Last week, Democrats agreed to a milder, compromise resolution, sponsored by the Republican Warner; Lieberman still opposed it.)

Three days after the hearing, I went to see Lieberman in his office. He was cheerful and easygoing and more convinced than usual of the essential rightness of his vision. I asked him if he thought that Democrats who voted for the resolution would truly be giving encouragement to the enemy. "The enemy believes—Ahmadinejad has said this repeatedly—that we don't have the will anymore for a long battle," he said, referring to the President of Iran.

When I asked him if he understood why Hillary Clinton might have reacted the way she did, he said, "I can't explain why she did that." Then he shook his head, apparently in sorrow.

Lieberman, who was the Democrats' nominee for Vice-President in 2000, clearly believes that he owes his party nothing. Only five Senate Democrats campaigned for him in last year's general election, and he has said that he will not necessarily support the next Democratic nominee for President. Dodd, who recently launched a campaign for the Democratic nomination—one that is seen as semi-quixotic, even though he has more experience than Clinton, Barack Obama, or John Edwards—certainly cannot count on Lieberman's support. Their friendship was ruptured when Dodd campaigned for Lamont in the Senate election last year.

Iraq has tested several relationships in the Senate. McCain and Carl Levin, the Armed Services Committee's Democratic chairman, have taken to bickering in public and on occasion seem unwilling to even look at each other. At one hearing, Levin asked for a review of certain benchmarks agreed to by the Iraqi government. McCain said, "Well, if you want to look back, that's fine, Mr. Chairman. But the fact is, I'm trying to look forward. I'm trying to stop from sending the wrong message to the men and women who are going to be at risk, some of whom are going to die, that we disapprove of their mission." The exchange continued:

Levin: According to the public-opinion polls, a significant amount of the troops that are there want us to change the direction in Iraq. So it's not us sending the wrong message; the troops themselves and their families have indicated very strongly in large numbers that the message that they want to get to the Iraqis is get on with their own government, get on with their own nation. So we're going to call—

McCain: Mr. Chairman, I think I'm familiar with the sentiment of many of the troops. And the fact is, they want to win.

Levin: We all want—

McCain: And that's what they want, and that's why we're changing the strategy, Mr. Chairman. And I'm sorry you don't support the strategy.

Levin: Well, it's a strategy which has failed.

But few relationships are as unhappy as the one between Connecticut's two senators. A wall in Lieberman's office is covered with photographs of the two men together. One is inscribed, by Dodd, "To Joe, our first appearance together as Senators! You obviously have forgotten the first rule of a junior senator. They should be seen and not heard!" Lieberman has, in past years, described Dodd as his "best friend" in the Senate. When I asked him if this was still true, his eyes narrowed, and he said, "I have so many good friends in the Senate. John McCain is a very good friend."

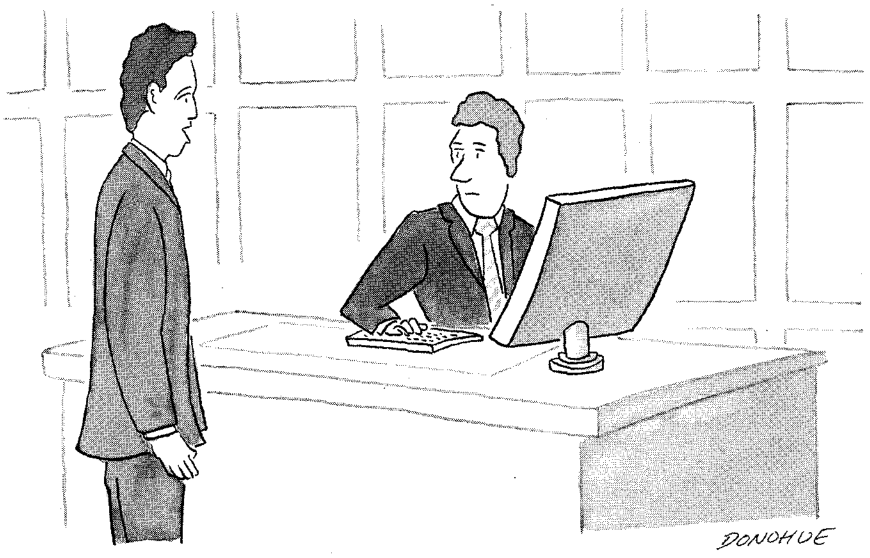
These days, most of Lieberman's closest friends in the Senate are Republicans. One of them is the Maine Republican Susan Collins. "In the lame-duck session right after the election, I went up to him on the floor of the Senate and gave him a kiss and welcomed him back," Collins said. "And one reason I did this was that his Democratic colleagues didn't rush over. I think they were worried about the reaction they would get from him. Some of them were embarrassed. Here he is, he's back. And he's the kingmaker, he holds their fate in his hands. How ironic is that?"

Lieberman says that he does, at times, feel isolated. He is a liberal on social policy and a conservative on defense, in the bygone style of the late Senator Henry (Scoop) Jackson. "I'm the Lorax," he said. "I'm saving that one tree."

In another conversation, he told me that he was reading "America Alone," a book by the conservative commentator Mark Steyn, which argues that Europe is succumbing, demographically and culturally, to an onslaught by Islam, leaving America friendless in its confrontation with Islamic extremism.

"The thing I quote most from it is the power of demographics, in Europe particularly," Lieberman said. "That's what struck me the most. But the other part is a kind of confirmation of what I know and what I've read elsewhere, which is that Islamist extremism has an ideology, and it's expansionist, it's an aggressive ideology. And the title I took to mean that we Americans will have ultimate responsibility for stopping this expansionism."

Lieberman likes expressions of American power. A few years ago, I was in a movie theatre in Washington when I noticed Lieberman and his wife, Hadassah, a few seats down. The film was "Behind Enemy Lines," in which Owen Wilson plays a U.S. pilot shot down in Bosnia. Whenever the American military scored an onscreen hit, Lieberman pumped his fist and said, "Yeah!" and "All right!"



"My wife is about to have a baby, so I was wondering if you could make me work late for the next eighteen years or so."

I asked him if Steyn's book appeals to him in part because he feels alone.

"Well, I'm surprisingly alone at this moment on the question of Iraq," he said. "Which is to say, I'm surprised that I'm alone. But I do believe that on the larger question of Islamist extremism there are a lot of others in the Democratic Party who see that as well." He went on, "One part of my sense of mission coming out of last year is to make this case within the Democratic Party, to be strong."

To Democrats, Lieberman's most vexing quality is not his early support for the war—Clinton, Dodd, and Edwards, among other senators, voted for the Iraq-war resolution in 2002. It is that no development—not the absence of weapons of mass destruction, or the Administration's innumerable and well-documented mistakes in post-invasion Iraq—has lessened his admiration for President Bush or his belief that the war has aided America in its fight against Islamic terrorism.

"I've had a lot of disappointments along the way here," Lieberman said. "So why do I trust President Bush in spite of the mistakes that were made, consequential mistakes? Because having watched him, having talked to him, I believe that he understands the life-and-death struggle we are in with the most deadly and unconventional enemy, Islamic extremism. And that he has shown himself, notwithstanding all these mistakes, willing to go forward with what he believes is right for the security of the country, regardless of what it has done to his popularity."

"Isn't President Bush responsible for losing this war?" I asked.

"Insofar as you have to hold the Chief Executive accountable, he bears responsibility for the mistakes that were made on his watch," Lieberman said. "But I think he understands that now. And, look, Rumsfeld is no longer there. Gates"—Robert Gates, the new Secretary of Defense—"is there. There are a lot of changes

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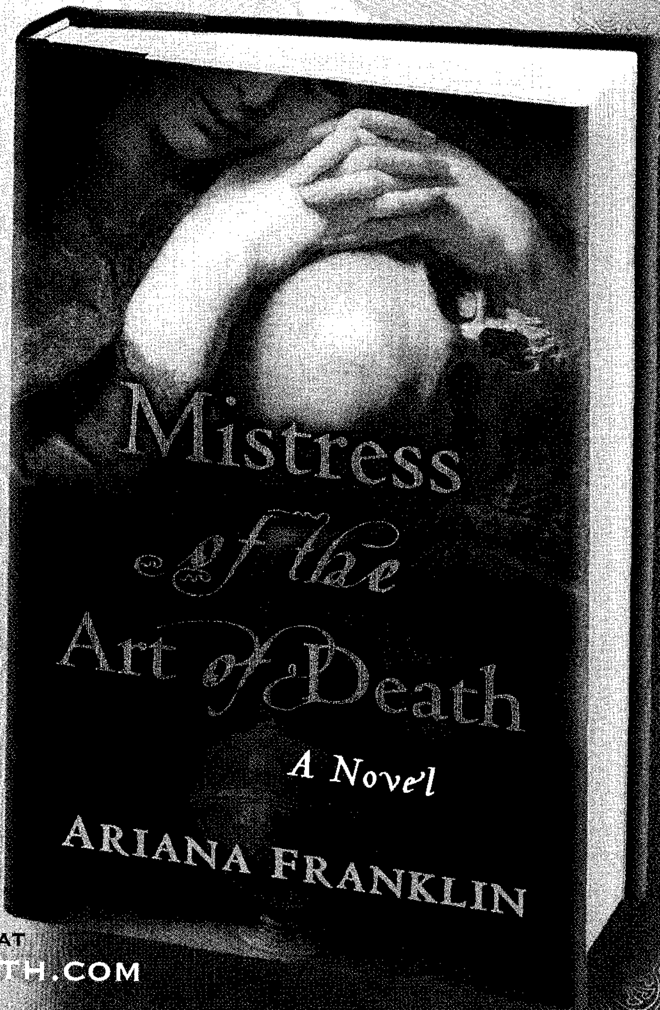

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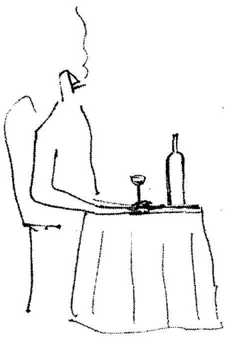
Lieberman is an Orthodox Jew who takes his faith seriously, but there are times when he seems to wander across the line that separates piety from sanctimony. One such moment came on January 14th, when he appeared with Chuck Hagel on "Meet the Press." Lieberman attacked senators who were critical of the President—including, presumably, Hagel—and said that his children and grandchildren would be imperilled by the unchecked rise of Islamic fundamentalism. "That's why I want to do everything I can to win in Iraq," he said. "And I think that's what my oath of office requires me to do."



Hagel became livid. "I am not, nor [is] any member of Congress that I'm aware of . . . advocating defeat," Hagel said. "That's ridiculous, and I'm offended that any responsible member of Congress or anyone else would even suggest such a thing. Senator Lieberman talks about his children and grandchildren. We all have children and grandchildren. He doesn't have a market on that."

McCain told me that one explanation for Lieberman's obdurate support for the President was politics. Lieberman, he implied, had invested too much in his advocacy of the war to back away now. "It might be that Joe was assaulted so harshly in the campaign that he felt that if he showed any chink in his armor, people would exploit it," he said. "You could do the commercial yourself." He added, "I think Joe *has* been critical. But you know, he's a much nicer man than I am, so maybe it's just that."

Christopher Dodd offered another perspective. A popular figure in the Senate who has the buoyancy of a natural politician, Dodd portrayed Lieberman as the last of the uncomplicated neoconservatives.

"I think there was this assumption that democracy was just waiting to blossom," Dodd said of Iraq. "Let's assume the President believed this, that it wouldn't take much to produce a democratic society in Iraq. I'm not opposed to that, and I think that may happen, but the idea that you could go from where they were was a leap of faith, and many took that leap. Joe took that leap. He thought this was one way to bring stability in the region."

Dodd went on, "I'm in the Brent Scowcroft school, the world as it is." Once, this would have been a surprising statement, particularly to Brent Scowcroft, who might be called a Republican fatalist. But Dodd said that the last four years had been "sobering" for him. "I'd love to see a democratic Middle East," he said. "But you've got to be a coherent society before you can be a democracy." In the absence of weapons of mass destruction, "If you came to the country and said, 'This guy's a bad guy, we want to invade his country,' I could not justify the loss of three thousand Americans for this, as much as I disliked Saddam."

I asked Dodd if he has spoken to any other senators who are as optimistic as Lieberman is about Iraq. "I'll tell you, I bet this has happened fifteen times in the last few days—conservative Republicans have said to me that they've told the White House that this is the last vote you're going to get out of them, a vote against the Iraq resolution," Dodd said. "They're angry, and they sure don't believe the new plan is going to work."

Neither Lieberman nor Dodd was eager to discuss the unravelling of their relationship, in particular its most painful episodes: Dodd's decision to endorse Lamont the morning after the Lieberman primary defeat, and his appearance in a Lamont television advertisement, in which he said, "People want different leadership in Washington."

Lieberman's friends were, of course, upset by Dodd's infidelity. "I found that whole thing almost unbelievable," Warren Rudman, the former New Hampshire senator, told me. "I can't imagine why Chris Dodd did that."

Dodd justifies his endorsement of Lamont as one of principle over friendship. "I'm the senior Democrat in the state," he said. "What do I tell a twenty-year-old, what do I tell someone who wants to be a Democrat and join the process? 'I'm sorry, the primary doesn't count, it doesn't make a difference'? It was painful. I didn't like it. But I wasn't going to turn around and tell people this doesn't mean anything." Dodd told me that the two still talk on the Senate floor. "Joe just said to me the other day, 'I disagree with you on this, but at least you're trying to get something done.' "

Another explanation for his endorsement could be deduced from Dodd's appearance last month in Dover, New Hampshire. Dodd's campaign for President is not a juggernaut—he jokes that he is currently competing with the margin of error in most polls. ("Is the motorcade ready?" he called out to me from his S.U.V. in Dover. The motorcade consisted of my rented Chevrolet.) But Dodd believes that it is still possible for a New England liberal (he prefers the word "progressive") to succeed in national politics, particularly when the country is turning decisively against the war. Dodd wants a binding resolution to stop the President's Iraq buildup, even though such a measure would almost certainly fail. "There's nothing wrong with losing a vote if you're making a point that people want us to make," he said. "Things are going to get a lot harder in the next month or two. If we're going to stop this, we have to stop it before the new troops get to Iraq. You're not going to cut off their funds once they're there. The window is closing. The country is way ahead of the Senate on this."

Still, even Dodd, with his antiwar, anti-Lieberman credentials, seemed unprepared for the brash liberalism on display in Dover. At one point, he told a crowd of more than a hundred Democrats, "I'm a strong advocate, by the way, that military recruiters ought to be allowed on the campuses of the United States. If a corporation that can violate the law can recruit, then the Army, the Navy, the Air Force ought to be able to recruit good people." This statement was met with near-silence. Finally, Dodd said, "It's O.K. to applaud for that." Few did.

Later, a leader of the local Strafford County Democrats, Tim Ashwell, said, "This is a very antiwar community." I asked him about Lieberman, and his hapless 2004 campaign for the Democratic Presidential nomination; Lieberman placed fifth in the New Hampshire primary, and dropped out of the race soon after. Ashwell didn't find that surprising. "People don't think of Lieberman as a Democrat," he said. ♦

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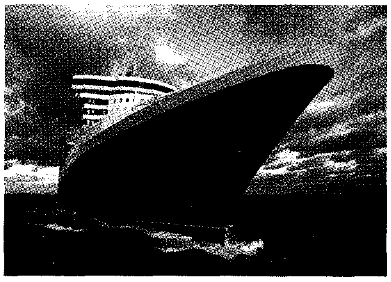

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Cate Blanchett branches out.

BY JOHN LAHR

In Sydney, Australia, on the bright, blustery morning of November 10th, toward the end of Pier 4, a "finger wharf" that reaches out two hundred yards into the harbor and houses the Sydney Theatre Company, a little bit of show-biz history took place. There, inside a cavernous former wool storehouse—now a dusty gray rehearsal room—amid a cluster of cameras, lights, and local journalists, the actress Cate Blanchett and her husband, the playwright Andrew Upton, announced their appointment as co-artistic directors of the S.T.C., Australia's most prestigious theatre, which operates three stages. Theatre history is studded with examples of renowned actor-managers—Molière, Shakespeare, and Sir Laurence Olivier come to mind—but never before had a movie actress of Blanchett's calibre, at the height of her powers and popularity, made this kind of commitment to the theatre community that launched her. Blanchett and Upton will officially begin their three-year appointment in 2008, after a year of shadowing the current artistic director, Robyn Nevin. They also happened to be in the process of staging a double bill at the theatre: Harold Pinter's "A Kind of Alaska," directed by Blanchett, and David Mamet's "Reunion," directed by Upton, both of which opened to strong reviews at the end of November. "Andrew and I are galvanized by a challenge," Blanchett said. "Frankly, this is the most exciting thing that has happened to us, apart from marriage and having children."

"I feel the need to move forward," Blanchett, who is thirty-seven, told me later. "I know it's going to broaden me as a human being. I hope it broadens me as an actor." She added, "Moviemaking becomes a little pointless after a time. You think, Well, yes, that's an incredible role, and, yes, it would probably stretch me as an actor. But performance is not, and never has been, really, all of who I am." Still, it is through film that most of her fans have come to know her. Blanchett's list of twenty-seven movies is notable for both its range and its ambition. In her most recent collection of character studies, she plays a predatory Nazi collaborator (Steven Soderbergh's "The Good German"), an American tourist who is shot in Morocco (Alejandro González Iñárritu's "Babel"), a British schoolteacher who has an affair with a fifteen-year-old student (Richard Eyre's "Notes on a Scandal," a performance for which she was just nominated for an Academy Award), and a version of Bob Dylan, complete with big hair and sideburns (Todd Haynes's "I'm Not There"). "I wanted to *be* him," Blanchett said of the singer. "It's the first time I ever had that feeling. I actually wanted to be Dylan. Ultimately, he just really didn't care. He's on his own path."

At the S.T.C., Blanchett, who calls herself a "theatre geek," was following her own path. Her appointment was also a strategic coup for the company: with Blanchett and Upton as artistic directors, its productions will attract international press and talent. (Philip Seymour Hoffman, for instance, will direct Upton's play "Riflemind," later this year.) And for a theatre company that, in 2005, found itself in the red for the first time in twenty-seven years, Blanchett's stardom will draw lucrative sponsorship. None of this sense of promise and purpose, however, seemed to catch the imagination of the local press back in November. When it was time for questions, the journalists seemed nonplussed. What if Blanchett got a movie role? they asked. Would she have time, in her busy film schedule, to undertake such a job? Did this mean that she and her sons—five-year-old Dashiell and two-year-old Roman—were going to live permanently in Sydney? How would her celebrity affect the running of the theatre? "Celebrity is a by-product," Blanchett replied firmly. "If that by-product can be harnessed to the company's name, fantastic." After the final question of the proceedings—which, like many before, was directed only at Blanchett—she put her hand on Upton's shoulder. "We're a team," she said.

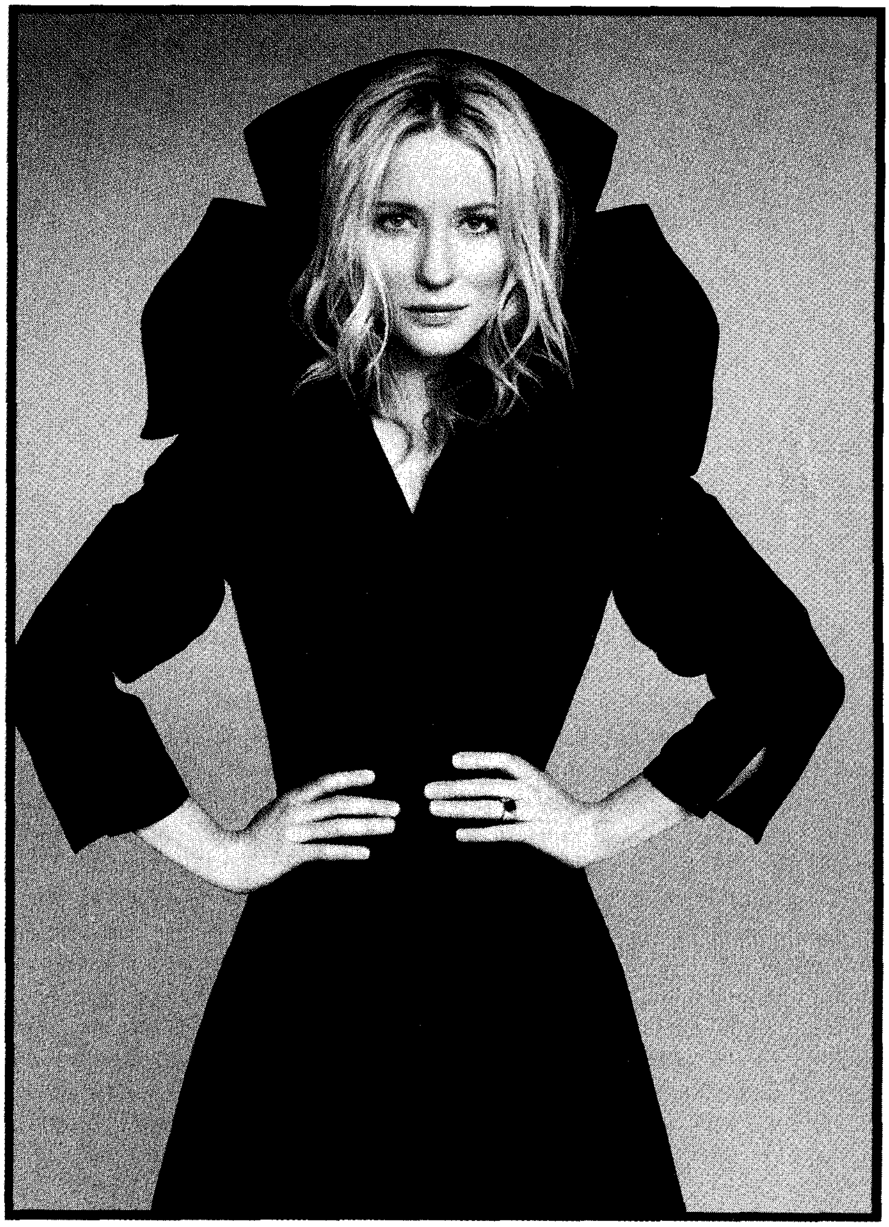
Upton, like his wife, seems to know himself without insisting on himself; he exudes a sort of ironic equanimity. In 1997, the newly married couple spent three months apart while Blanchett was shooting Shekhar Kapur's "Elizabeth," and vowed, Blanchett said, to "never ever do that again." In the decade since then, they have travelled together whenever possible. The S.T.C. offer coincided, serendipitously, with their sense that they needed, for their children's sake, to settle somewhere. Over lunch, at the theatre's restaurant later that day, Blanchett turned to Upton and said, "If it wasn't for you, I think I probably would have imploded. Acting takes its toll on people. There's a kind of madness in it that's thrilling and wonderful but also can be incredibly destructive." She turned to me. "Andrew is an incredibly strong person," she said.

Strength—or the outward appearance of it—is not the first thing that comes to mind when you meet the impish Upton, who is forty-one. His sinew lies in his good-humored stability and in his allegiance to his wife's talent. Upton studied playwriting and directing at the Victorian College of the Arts School of Drama, in Melbourne, and has already done a series of successful stage adaptations for the S.T.C., including a tempestuous version of Ibsen's "Hedda Gabler" (2004), starring his wife. He and Blanchett got to know each other in 1996, while working on one of her lesser-known Australian movies, "Thank God He Met Lizzie." "We were both taken by surprise," Upton said. "I mean, it could have been a one-night stand. We just kept going. Three weeks into our relationship, Cate says she thought, Oh, God, he's gonna ask me to marry him. I'm gonna have to say yes. I asked her three weeks later." Their decisions to marry and to run the S.T.C. seemed to share an adventurous sense of optimism. "Our spirit is jump in, then just keep going until you can make the thing work or not," Blanchett said. "If it's not making sense, you pull it apart and try to put it back together again."

"Walking a tightrope" is how Blanchett once described the experience of acting. A similar metaphor came up over lunch, when Upton described his view of their family life. "There's someone on top riding a bike with a bar and a ball balancing the thing," Upton said. "I think we're in there."

"In the ball?" Blanchett said.

"Me and the boys are in there."



"Performance is not all of who I am," Blanchett says. Photograph by Ruven Afanador.

A flicker of distress showed in her eyes. "That's not true," she said.

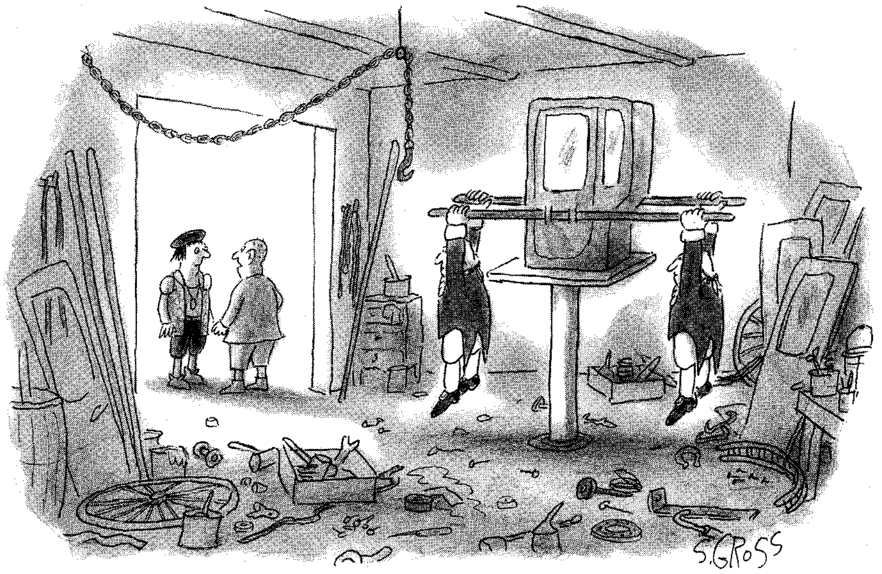
"In a balancing way."

"You're not in the ball with the boys."

"I mean, there's balancing in it," Upton said.

The exchange, in its matter-of-factness, seemed evidence of the clarity that Upton brings to Blanchett's thinking, which, she has admitted, is "very meandering—nothing is linear."

When I asked Blanchett if she agreed with Upton about their family dynamic, she said carefully, "There's something about being an actor that is shaman-like. It can produce a great amount of superstition in terms of how you connect to it. To talk about that is very private. Before Andrew, in previous partnerships, even friendships, I couldn't go there. I didn't want to break some spell." She turned to Upton. "I met you and I finally could talk to somebody else about that stuff. I feel like every time I make a film or go into a rehearsal room I've already collaborated with you on it. The hardest thing is to get up there and voice what it is that you're



"Tell your liege it'll be in the shop for at least three days."

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feeling, for fear of being misunderstood or locked down too early or just plain ridiculous. I think that to be able to sort of air that stuff with you . . . allows it to grow," she said.

From the outset of her acting career—she studied at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA), in Sydney, from 1990 to 1992—Blanchett exhibited an uncanny ability to enter the kind of egoless state that her former teacher the director Lindy Davies calls "transformational." In work and in life, Blanchett, whose favorite word is "fluidity," has a kind of inconclusiveness that lets her remain receptive. "I don't like everything to be tied neatly in bows," she told me. "If it's flowing, you don't arrest it." Keeping things open when you're acting, she explained, reinforces the mystery and the intensity of the moment. "I think it's important to pin questions down," she said. "Sometimes you can answer things definitively within a character, within a moment. And sometimes it's important that you don't."

"Cate is willing to throw herself into a chaotic state out of which something will arise," the director Shekhar Kapur told me. "The fluidity you get in Cate is also because of the contradictions inside her." Blanchett is both candid and private, gregarious and solitary, self-doubting and daring, witty and melancholy. It was these contradictions that prompted Kapur to cast her as Elizabeth I, in "Elizabeth," one of the films that made Blanchett an international star. "I was looking for somebody who could portray not only a reality but an ethereal quality," he said. "This ability to be both of the earth and of the spirit was very attractive to me—the ability to be both vulnerable and totally ruthless. Cate's absolute ruthlessness is with herself, an obsessive ruthlessness about her craft."

"There's something tightly wound inside her, something hidden," the British director Jonathan Kent, who worked with Blanchett on the Almeida Theatre Company's 1999 revival of David Hare's "Plenty," said. "An uncontrolled core that she's not entirely in charge of, which, when it's harnessed, makes her riveting." In "Plenty," Blanchett played Susan Traherne, a woman whose life after the Second World War is a slow diminuendo into despair. The production was controversial, and some of the reviews were catty—the *Independent* suggested that only Dame Edna could have done more to expose the weaknesses of the play. Blanchett was distraught. "She didn't weep like a prima donna," Upton said. "She wept like a betrayed woman." Since that incident, Blanchett has never read a review; Kent, for his part, has never quite believed in her apparent confidence. "That grounded self that you and I perceive—the directness, the straightness, the lack of nonsense—in a way I think that's a performance," he said. "I think the hidden chaos of Cate is so interesting."

Scott Rudin, a co-producer of "Notes on a Scandal," told me, "She's very shrewd about what capital she gives up and when. When she gives you the tiniest bit of insight into why the character's behaving the way she is, you gobble it up. I think it's a combination of alluring and elusive." He added, "It is the elusiveness that is the key." Blanchett herself made the same point. She was describing her character Lena, a Nazi collaborator in Berlin in 1945, in Soderbergh's "The Good German," which she began shooting, without any rehearsal, the Monday after she'd completed "Notes on a Scandal." The scene Blanchett filmed that day had Lena sitting on a bench with an American military attorney from whom she's hoping to get the papers she needs to leave Berlin. "I thought, The biggest thing I'm gonna do is cross my legs," she told me. "I'm not gonna give anything away to this man. I knew everything that Lena was concealing. But it was, like, I'm not going to let Steven Soderbergh know. I'm going to be completely, utterly ambiguous." She continued, "Ambiguity is not absence. It's a wildly contradicting series of actions, emotions, and intentions. There was a line where Lena said, 'No one is all good or all bad.' And I thought that she was referring to herself. So I let a tiny little bit of her own self-hatred come through." (Soderbergh got his shot on the first take.)

What Blanchett hides from her directors and her audience she also hides from herself. "I do like to preserve the mystique of the thing, for myself as much as anyone else," she has said. Over the years, she has repeatedly dodged autobiographical questions by claiming, "I've sort of forgotten my childhood." These ellipses in conversation help Blanchett to trick herself out of self-consciousness. "I'm not interested in the character I am in myself," she told James Lipton on the television series "Inside the Actors Studio." "Any connection that I have to my characters will be subliminal and subconscious." The first time Blanchett realized that she might have talent is associated in her mind with this ability to make herself disappear. She was in her second year at Melbourne University, appearing in a play by Kris Hemensley called "European Features," at Melbourne's La Mama. "My sister, Genevieve, came to see the play," Blanchett said. "My sister's a harsh critic. She said, 'That's the first time I couldn't see you.' I understood what she meant."

Blanchett grew up in Ivanhoe, a leafy suburb of Melbourne, beside the Yarra River. She was the middle child, between an older brother, Bob, who had a mild case of cerebral palsy, and Genevieve. (Bob works as a computer programmer; Genevieve is studying architecture, after a successful career as a stage designer.) Of the siblings, Blanchett was, by her own admission, the most adventurous. "I felt very free as a child," she said. Together, she and Genevieve invented characters, which Blanchett would play, for days at a time, around the house. "My sister and I would dress me up in something," she said. "I'd pull a face or a stance; she'd give them names and an identity." When Blanchett was around nine, her enthusiasm for performance took the form of knocking on strangers' doors to see if she could talk her way inside their homes with a tall tale about a lost dog. "It was the adrenaline rush, really," she said. "My friend hid in the bushes. I remember the woman at the door saying, 'I haven't seen a dog. Come in. I'll ask my husband.' I looked at the bushes thinking, Oh, my God, what am I doing? I remember the look in this woman's eyes when she started to think, You haven't lost a dog, have you? It suddenly had become a real thing." Blanchett continued, "My whole childhood was like that. If someone dared me, I'd do it."

Blanchett's mother, June, was a jazz-loving schoolteacher. Her Texas-born father, Robert, who met June when his Navy ship broke down in Melbourne, had, according to Blanchett, "a very dry sense of humor." He had quit school at fourteen—"I went to the school for bums," he told his daughter. Robert put himself through night school, worked at a television station, returned to Australia to marry June, and got into advertising. Then, when Blanchett was ten, he died. "I was playing the piano," she has recalled. "He walked past the window. I waved goodbye. He was going off to work. He had a heart attack that day. He was only forty." The fact that she hadn't embraced him before he left haunted Blanchett. "I developed this ritual where I couldn't leave the house until I could actually physically say goodbye to everyone," she said. The ritual continues, according to Upton. "She will never forget to say goodbye," he said. "When you're going off to work, if you're going overseas, that point of departure is really important to her."

When asked about her father now, Blanchett generally brushes the questions aside. "I don't necessarily need to consciously understand my past," she said. She went on, "Drama school was a place where a lot of these things came up, but in a way that one could deal with them in a visceral sense. You move them through your body and out your fingertips. Then you keep the bits that are useful and throw away the junk." Still, the loss was clearly a transforming one, for her and for her work. She has called bereavement "a strange gift." In many essential ways, she told me, her father's death was the shadow that informed her brightness. "It's chiaroscuro," she said.

After Robert died, Blanchett developed a passion for horror movies. "I loved being terrified," she said. "It used to be a badge of honor if you could sit through 'Halloween II.'" Some of the appeal of horror movies lies in the thrill of surviving them, of, in a sense, cheating death. It's a thrill that carries over, as Upton pointed out, to acting. "You go onstage and you're alive," he said. "You walk offstage, then the character's gone. You survive the experience. It's scintillating." He added, "I think that's why Cate's not one of those Method people who carry the role offstage with them." Over the years, Blanchett has turned her appetite for this form of transcendence into a kind of life style. "You can't say no to things because you're frightened," she told a group of students in 2005.

The idea of performance first captured Blanchett's imagination when she was about five and saw a production of "The Mikado" in which an actor's long mustache fell off onstage. "You could feel the whole audience go, 'Oh, my God, something real just happened,'" Blanchett told Lipton. "He said, 'Oh, you can never trust these Japanese,' or some joke. I remember that moment—seeing the actor handling a real moment in a completely surreal and unreal production. I thought, I wish I could be up there with him." Throughout her childhood, on Saturday afternoons, Blanchett attended a drama class in a musty warehouse, with a costume box full of "things that were slightly frayed around the edges." "I would often spend the whole class by myself, or with another girl, trying on this stuff and making little things up," she told me. She was, she added, "the child of whom everyone said, 'Oh, she's gonna be an actress.'"

Still, Blanchett started out at the University of Melbourne as an art-history and economics major. After two years, she auditioned, on a whim, for the three-year acting course at NIDA. Her most celebrated performance at NIDA was one for which she wasn't originally cast. She was playing Clytemnestra in a production of Sophocles' "Electra"; two weeks into rehearsals, the woman playing Electra withdrew. The director, Lindy Davies, asked, "Who can work over Easter?," and Blanchett raised her hand. "One of the things that she can do," Davies told me, "is move into the realm of metaphor, but without being histrionic." Davies recalled Blanchett weeping during rehearsals. "She sobbed on the floor in the sunlight. She was talking about Menelaus. The sense of grief was like a waterfall cascading. The thing is that she understands loss."

"When I came out of drama school, I wasn't that hot young thing," Blanchett told me. But she gathered heat soon enough. In 1993, at the Sydney equivalent of the Tony Awards, she was voted Best Newcomer, for her performance in Timothy Daly's "Kafka Dances"; the same year, for her appearance opposite Geoffrey Rush in a memorable production of Mamet's "Oleanna," she was named Best Actress. (She was the first person ever to win both categories at once.) Three years later, Blanchett auditioned to play the role of the mercurial title character in Gillian Armstrong's "Oscar and Lucinda" (1997). The movie, which was based on the novel by Peter Carey about two obsessive gamblers, brought Blanchett's "chalky phosphorescence," as the director Anthony Minghella called it, out of the Southern Hemisphere and into the international arena. After her next movie, "Elizabeth," the world, and every film director in it, knew her name.

At NIDA, one of Blanchett's teachers gave her some advice that she took to heart. "When you're performing, always keep your lights on," he told her. "When you're home, turn them off." Blanchett and Upton have settled down in the sleepy heart of Sydney normality, the sedate suburb of Hunter's Hill, about fifteen minutes northwest of town, where the noisiest thing in the street is an explosion of purple jacarandas. Ten minutes from their rented sandstone house, they are renovating a house on three acres of land seeded with Norfolk pine and eucalyptus trees, which hide the neighbors and muffle the sound of cars. To Blanchett, the place, which she calls her "oasis," has "a feeling of being completely in the bush." Even in her current cramped residence, Blanchett has established a sense of calm order. The living room is dominated by a television, photographs of a windswept Upton and Blanchett on the New Zealand coast, and, in the corner, a small children's table, where, on the day I visited, Roman was proudly learning how to maneuver his knife and fork over some fish sticks. Nowhere was there any sign of Blanchett's line of work. (A converted closet off the dining room serves as her office; a bevy of her awards—Academy, Golden Globe, and BAFTA among them—is pushed to the far corner of her desk by a morass of papers, books, and photographs of the children.)

When he was finished with his lunch, Roman came over to discuss the possible modes of transportation to the playground, where his nanny was about to take him. He was leaning toward taking the stroller. Blanchett listened closely to his argument, then said, "Maybe you should walk. What do you think? Walk on your little feet?" Roman considered for a moment, then agreed to leg it. Later, Blanchett negotiated with the inquisitive Dashiell, whom she'd just picked up from the local Montessori school and who had gone from voluble curiosity in her gray BMW ("What are guts? What are the guts of the house?") to visible fury over his lunch menu of soup and fish sticks: "I don't want it; they're disgusting!"

"That's his favorite word of the moment—'disgusting,' " Blanchett said, as Dashiell's complaints escalated. She leaned down to speak to him. "Hang on," she said. "You're giving conflicting messages. You're saying you don't want fish fingers, but all of a sudden you do want fish fingers." Dashiell mumbled something about wanting a sandwich and not soup. "If you start to eat your meal, darling, then we can make you a sandwich," Blanchett said.

Dashiell said, "I'll eat the bread but not the soup."

"This is the new Dash," Blanchett said, smiling. "He thinks he's living in a hotel and wants to order room service all the time."

"I don't want to," Dashiell said, and slapped at Blanchett's hands. She calmly scooped him up and took him to his bedroom at the back of the house. A few minutes later, the sound of his grievance ceased, and Blanchett returned. "There's a whole thing with my generation about having the children like you," she said. "Most parents want to be friends." Her role at home, she made it clear, was mother, not pal.

At home and at work, Blanchett has a talent for listening. When she studies a script, she often writes down everything that her character says about herself and about other characters, as well as everything that other people in the script say about her character. "You get an objective sense, within the story, of how they're perceived and how they perceive themselves," she said. "You get a sort of three-dimensional sense of what they are doing." She went on, "Each project you encounter reveals to you the way to work on it. It's all about the text. Some pieces need to be invented, or reimagined, or teased out. Some just need to be unlocked."

She has the capacity to see herself as part of a larger landscape. Her form of storytelling, therefore, lies not just in the dialogue but in the dance of the character. "She has a constantly amorphous physicality," Geoffrey Rush told me. "That's why she seems to transform from role to role." She also has the acuity to sit inside an emotion and parse it. In Tom Tykwer's "Heaven" (2002), for instance, she played Philippa, an English teacher in Italy, frustrated by the failure of the corrupt carabinieri to stop the drug lord who is selling to children at her school and whose drugs killed her husband. In an act of rough justice, Philippa plants a bomb in the drug lord's office. We watch Blanchett place the device in his wastepaper basket before escaping from the building; we also watch a cleaning lady empty the contents of the basket into her cart, which she wheels onto an elevator carrying a man and two girls. The scene in which Philippa is confronted with the news that she has killed four people, including two children, is perhaps Blanchett's greatest emotional moment on film. Her expression goes from blankness, to shock, to sorrow, to disbelief, to moral horror, to a grief so overwhelming that she finally faints in anguish.

In her career, Blanchett has played Australian, American, Scottish, Russian, English, Irish, French, Italian, and German characters. "She can do a voice in soprano, a baritone voice, a nasal voice, an adenoidal voice, a three-octave voice, or she can do something quite tinny and twangy," the dialect coach Tim Monich told me. "People use the phrase 'I'm gonna make it my own.' With Cate, it's quite the opposite; it's about adapting herself." The key to Blanchett's characterizations is not so much the imitation of sound as the penetration of syntax. "An actor's job is partly anthropological," she told me, and the character's idiom is where she does much of her excavation. "The way people speak reveals how they think," she said. "The rhythm reveals emotion, it reveals intention." When she was at Melbourne University, working part time as a waitress at the Old Homestead Inn to pay her way, Blanchett would jot down overheard conversations on her pad; those "found moments" went into a play that she wrote with another student, about life in the city and how people's conversations are often "a way of avoiding rather than communicating."

Over the decades, her methods have become more cunning and more detailed. When preparing to play the title role in Joel Schumacher's "Veronica Guerin" (2003), a portrait of the Irish journalist who was murdered for her investigations into the drug trade, Blanchett listened to every interview that Guerin had ever given. "You could hear the way she was thinking," Blanchett said. "You could hear the missteps; you could hear when she wasn't telling the truth; you could hear when she was unsure of something. I thought, Ah, she's not sure about her own intelligence."

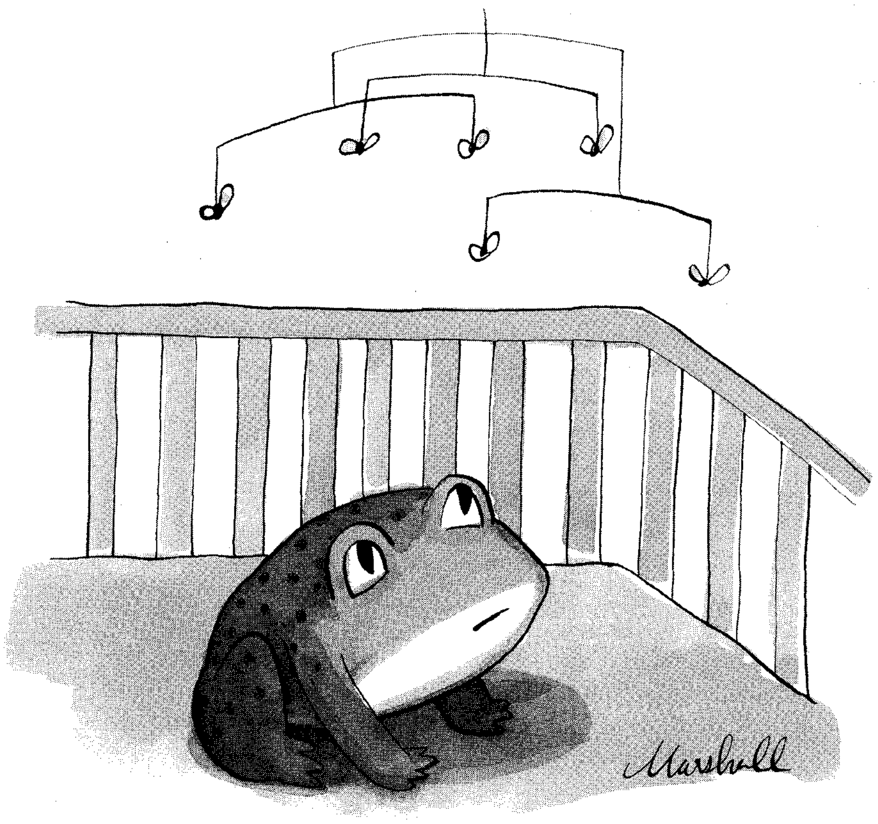
"Every seemingly little trivial piece of information is something that can feed her," said Monich, who worked with Blanchett on her version of Katharine Hepburn's imperious, vowel-strangled Yankee barrage of words in Martin Scorsese's "The Aviator" (2004). It was Monich who first told Blanchett about Hope Williams, a socialite and actress for whom Hepburn was an understudy in "Holiday," on Broadway, in 1928. "She was a genuine rich girl whom Philip Barry wrote a couple of plays for," Monich said. "I had this theory that Hope Williams was a role model for Hepburn as a person, as a character, as an actress. They called her the Park Avenue Stride Girl. Later, it became clear she was a lesbian. She had very short hair. . . . Cate was completely intrigued with my theory. We both became obsessed with Hope Williams." Monich and Blanchett told Scorsese, who screened for them Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur's "The Scoundrel," in which Williams makes an entrance in a stylish hat with a breezy "Hello, hello." In "The Aviator," Blanchett pays homage to that scene, when Hepburn arrives at her family's New England summer lunch party. "Cate is imitating Katharine Hepburn imitating Hope Williams," Monich said.

At her first meeting with Scorsese for the film, Blanchett brought a coffee-table book containing studio stills of Hepburn. "She said, 'Look, I looked at some stills of Katharine Hepburn,' " Scorsese told me. "And she got in a certain position, sort of crouching down. Cate said, 'I think she was like this.' Sure enough, she just had it. She had the gesture, she had the body lines, the look of Katharine Hepburn." In her research, "the most fantastic resource," Blanchett said, was Dick Cavett's 1973 two-part interview with Hepburn, then in her mid-sixties. "She was older and her voice had calcified and her whole personality had become a burlesque of itself, but it was fascinating to see how she behaved, and how uncomfortable she was," Blanchett told the *Times*. Her portrayal of Hepburn, for which she won an Academy Award, managed to suggest a defensiveness behind the brusque bravado, especially in the vocal restrictions of her machine-gun laugh.

In a preproduction discussion for last year's "Notes on a Scandal," Richard Eyre says he got off to "a slightly sticky start with Cate." He told me, "She'd had one session with a dialect coach, and was she going to have another? I was worried about whether she'd be class-specific. Her character is kind of upper-middle bohemian. I wanted the distinction between her and Judi Dench's character, who is petit bourgeois, to be clear." Eyre continued, "I think she thought I was overconcerned with the externals instead of the psychology." "He was really worried about the issue of class," Blanchett explained. " 'Richard,' I said, 'I need to work on it because I'm not a mimic. I need to sit down and work on it.' So the accent became an issue, when I didn't want to focus on the accent but on the meat of things." No sooner were Eyre's words out of his mouth than he realized that he'd made a mistake. "I was sitting in my kitchen and talking. She said, 'Don't you think I can do this?' " Eyre said. "She was upset. I must have been eroding her self-confidence. I felt as bad as I've ever felt. I apologized. She didn't extract revenge."

In fact, Blanchett turned in one of her most thrilling performances, as the art teacher Sheba Hart. "She was quite ruthless in the way she approached that role," the British playwright Patrick Marber, who wrote the screenplay, said. "This was a woman whom she was not going to explain or apologize for—she was just going to play it. She never asked me to write something that would make her more sympathetic or her predicament more understandable." On the other hand, Blanchett was willing to disagree with lines that she felt didn't match the character she had in mind. In one scene, after Sheba's affair with her fifteen-year-old student is made public and she has taken refuge with her teaching cohort and confidante, Barbara, she discovers Barbara's toxic diaries, full of twisted sexual obsession with her, and taped-in mementos of the infatuation. Sheba melts down. Marber recalls, "I put this line in it, 'Where did you get my hair? Did you pluck it from the bath with some special fucking tweezers?' She said, 'I don't want to say that line. It's too funny. It will corrupt the tone of where Sheba's at.' We hammer-and-tonged it for about ten minutes. Eventually, I said, 'Oh, please, just please.' I think she felt compelled to concede to the writer, even if he was a bloody idiot. I think that's because she's come from the theatre."

On the day that Blanchett and Upton announced their artistic leadership of the Sydney Theatre Company, she assured the wary journalists, "We've got



"Yes, he has deep pockets. But I never realized how short his arms are."

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good instincts and a good eye." Her visual sophistication is apparent in her art collection, which includes works by Paula Rego, Howard Hodgkin, and Tim Maguire. After tea, she suggested that we visit a gallery that featured artists in whom she had an interest. There was a provocative show by the Chinese conceptual artist Zhang Huan, that included disturbing images of the artist buried beneath a mound of books and appearing to sodomize a donkey. At the same gallery, Blanchett studied the Chinese-born Sydney artist Guan Wei's "Echo," a series of forty-two panels painted as mythological maps of Australia, which appropriated figures from European colonial exploration, as well as Chinese landscape painting. On the periphery of another Guan painting, a wild seascape in black, were iconic emblems of Australia's past and present: galleons, soldiers, Aborigines, and kangaroos. At the center were roiling waves and clouds, in which pink figures fell from boats and bobbed in the surf. At the edge was the desert.

Blanchett scrutinized Guan's works. "He's very witty," she said. "Towns called Dread and Bathe. It seduces you with one feeling, then it undercuts it. He's got actual creatures, then mythological creatures. He's got Chinese characters, to which he's added little brushstrokes that make them not quite those characters, so it's an invented language." She went on, "It's about the way we tell ourselves stories: how we handle failure, how we handle success, how we place ourselves against the rest of the world. All these things are at the core of who I am, who we all are. It's somewhere bound up with this journey inward."

Two days later, Blanchett, Upton, and I met at the S.T.C.'s three-hundred-seat main stage, to look at the set for "Reunion" and "A Kind of Alaska," which had just been constructed. Blanchett regarded the moody, brackish gray-green backdrop and the walkway that led to an angled square in the center; she and Upton intended to flood the space so that the performing area would appear to be a floating island. "One thing I do understand is space," she'd told me earlier, and so it seemed. The design was playful and daring, poetic and timeless. "It really liberates preconceptions," she said. She said that she had seen a similar effect used at the Saatchi Gallery, in London. "I asked the curator how deep the water was. He said, 'It's as deep as you want it to be.' "

In "Alaska," which is inspired by "Awakenings," Oliver Sacks's study of several survivors of "sleeping sickness," the heroine, Deborah, after having been "asleep" for thirty years, awakens, struggles to get her bearings in this strange new world, then sinks back into darkness. "I've always been interested in the emergent consciousness—that point between wakefulness and slumber, that place where the sense of one's self is extremely malleable," Blanchett said. "She's a broken person who's trying to reassemble herself." Toward the end of the play, Deborah starts to feel her mind receding. "Oh, dear," she says. "Yes, I think they're closing in. They're closing the walls in. Yes." On the play's last beat, Blanchett and Upton planned to have the water seep upward. "It somehow formally completes the evening," she said.

Later that day, I met up with Blanchett again to accompany her to the opening night of "Keating!," a musical revue about the trials and tribulations of Australia's flamboyant former Prime Minister Paul Keating, directed by Neil Armfield. Before we left, she insisted on playing for me the soundscape she was devising for "A Kind of Alaska." "Chris Abrahams is an amazing pianist and plays in a jazz trio called the Necks. Abrahams did this music—sort of a hybrid form," she said. With her elbows planted on the desk and her face in her hands, she leaned forward, concentrating on the insistent pounding that was both funereal and celebratory, like a heartbeat getting stronger. Voices and archival sounds were layered into it: a piano played a snippet of "If You Were the Only Girl in the World"; a voice growled "piss in your face." The cursing voice was authentic—taken from a video of Sacks's patients, which Blanchett had tracked down, she said, after noticing a footnote in "Awakenings." She listened awhile longer, then hit "Pause." "The theme is good," she said, "but it's just too present. You don't want to give it all away in the soundscape. There are all these memories, inventions, planes of supposed reality. If you describe them literally, then it depletes them. The audience has to listen with their reaching ears." Blanchett shoved the CD into her bag. "We're gonna have to fuck with it," she said.

When we arrived at the Belvoir Street Theatre, a converted tomato-sauce factory, the lobby was a scrum of people, with blinking red lights strung around the low ceilings and the exuberant buzz of a beer cellar. Blanchett pushed her way through the well-wishers and newshounds until she ran into Gillian Armstrong. In the hubbub, it was impossible to hear what she was saying. Instead, as the cameras flashed, I watched her easy smile and thought about a story that Armstrong had told me on the phone the night before. "I ran the first answer print of 'Oscar and Lucinda' at the lab for the color grader, Arthur Cambridge, whom I worked with for many years," she said. "You sit in the dark. You watch the film at mute, with no sound at all. No one had ever heard of or seen Cate before." She went on, "We're halfway through the film when Arthur said, 'Is she a nice person? It just comes through that she is.' I thought, Isn't that great? He's the first audience."

After we took our seats, a tall, handsome older man in a blue sports coat stopped beside us. "Hello, Cate," he said. It was Keating himself. The lights dimmed. "I love it when it goes dark," she said. "It's like a slumber party." She settled back to be, for once, a member of the audience. The show had a fine set of impudent lyrics and an inventive staging; it seemed to release Blanchett's robust sense of humor. The sultry face of the glamour pages gave up its famous composure; the poised lips dissolved into guffaws. Blanchett rocked in her seat. At one point, in "Freaky," a song about Alexander Downer, the current Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, who became a figure of fun after he was photographed in fishnet stockings and women's shoes for a charity event, Blanchett was surprised to find herself part of the joke. Downer was played by the show's lyricist and composer, Casey Bennetto, a large man with a hairy back who swanned onstage in the tight-fitting garter-belted mufti of a dominatrix. He looked, more or less, like a bratwurst in heels. Bennetto worked the room with gusto:

> I'm a greasy-cheek freak
> A leader of tomorrow,
> But I won't be 'round next week
> 'Cause I'm too freaky.

As he marched up the aisle loudly lamenting his volatile career, he came upon Blanchett. He looked at her for a split second, then flopped into her lap and, invoking the singer Barry White, ad-libbed, "It's S.T.C./When you're next to me." The audience, and Blanchett, howled.

When the show was over, she made her way toward the exit. Just before we got there, Blanchett was asked to return to be photographed. When I turned around, she had vanished, swallowed up by the milling crowd. For a moment, I thought I'd lost her; then it occurred to me to follow the popping flashbulbs, which, like the landing lights of an airstrip, led inevitably to Blanchett. About forty-five minutes later, we made our way back through the theatre, through the dressing rooms, past the laundry room, the wardrobe, and out into the rain-cooled air.

Blanchett had made a reservation at an Italian restaurant she liked. From the table, she phoned home to check on the boys, which led to a discussion of parenthood. "I find it's made me more economical, more focussed, more generous, less self-centered," she said. "I'm grateful for it." She went on, "I remember embarking on 'Veronica Guerin' after Dash was born, thinking I have nothing to give this project because I'm so filled up with this creature we've created. But I've become a better actor because of it. I think parenthood is knowing what cards you've got and then throwing them up in the air. You need to let go. It's like when you experience intense grief—you often have the deepest insights because the dead wood's been cleared out. When you're absolutely exhausted, somehow the work you've been consciously trying to do gets done on a different, deeper level." Earlier, Upton had told me that Blanchett was "in a constant battle between optimism and pessimism—the futility of all the effort." As Blanchett tucked into her *fagottini di carne,* I asked her about this. "We sort of liberate one another from melancholy," she said of her husband. "At least, he certainly does with me. The only thing that gets in the way is lack of time." Nonetheless, they have considered having another child. Just that day, Blanchett said, Upton had taken a Pilates class at home with a female instructor who had a newborn baby. Blanchett held the baby while Upton ran through his stretching regime. "I was in my pajamas," she said. "I held this seven-week-old baby. He came out looking at me like 'Don't.' And I did." Blanchett looked away for a moment. "The reality of what three children would be like?" she said. She turned back to her pasta. "We like a bit of chaos," she said. ♦

Headline in the Narragansett (R.I.) Times.

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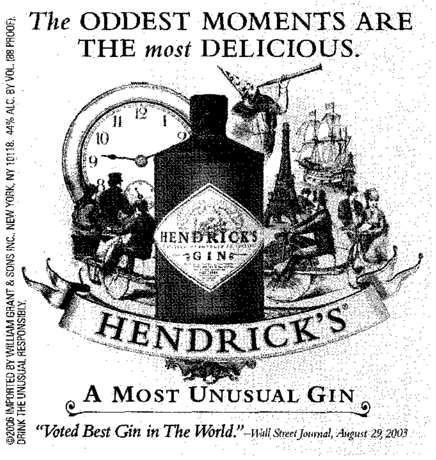
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ANNALS OF COMMUNICATIONS

THE FIXER

Why New Yorkers call Howard Rubenstein when they've got a problem.

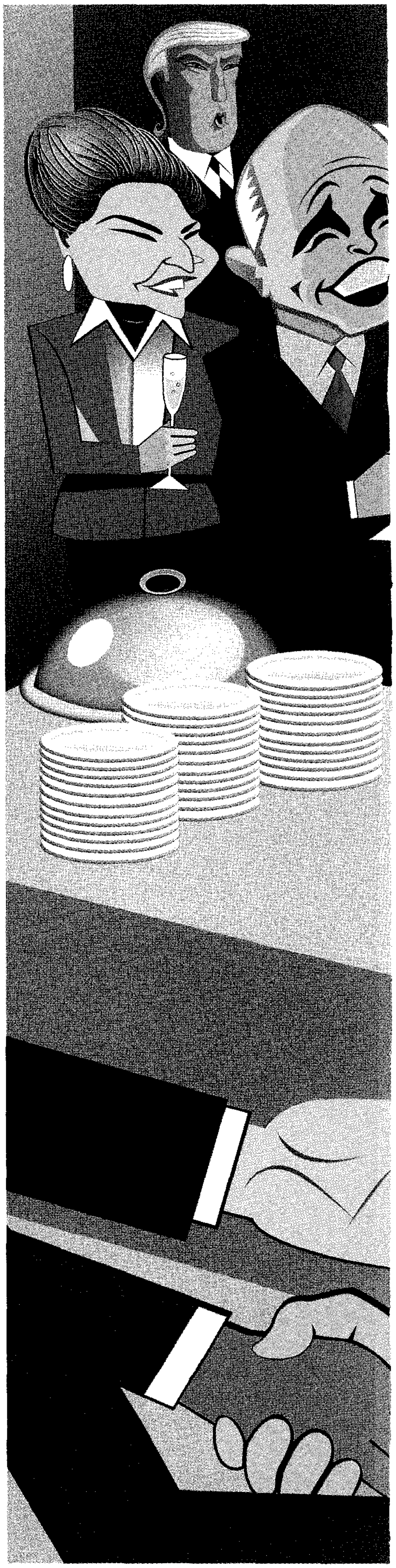
BY KEN AULETTA

For years, many of the city's wealthiest and most visible personalities have been represented by a somewhat achromatic gentleman who is paid to keep them in the public eye in times of triumph, out of the press in their hours of shame, and, in general, to provide advice, comfort, and refuge as the moment demands. Wearing dull suits and dull rimless glasses, this gentleman (and that is his demeanor: mild and well mannered in an old-fashioned way) has none of the swagger or élan of the public-relations men of an earlier era, like Ben Sonnenberg or Edward Bernays; nor does he frequent Elaine's, like Bobby Zarem, or guard the door at movie screenings, like Peggy Siegal. And yet he is ubiquitous, trusted, a kind of gentle fixer for those who run New York: its governments and newspapers, its cultural institutions, boardrooms, and sports teams. He is rarely recognized by the greater public, save, perhaps, as the invisible author of a well-placed quote in the gossip columns. "Flack," "mouthpiece"—these terms for P.R. men and women undersell the importance of Howard Rubenstein.

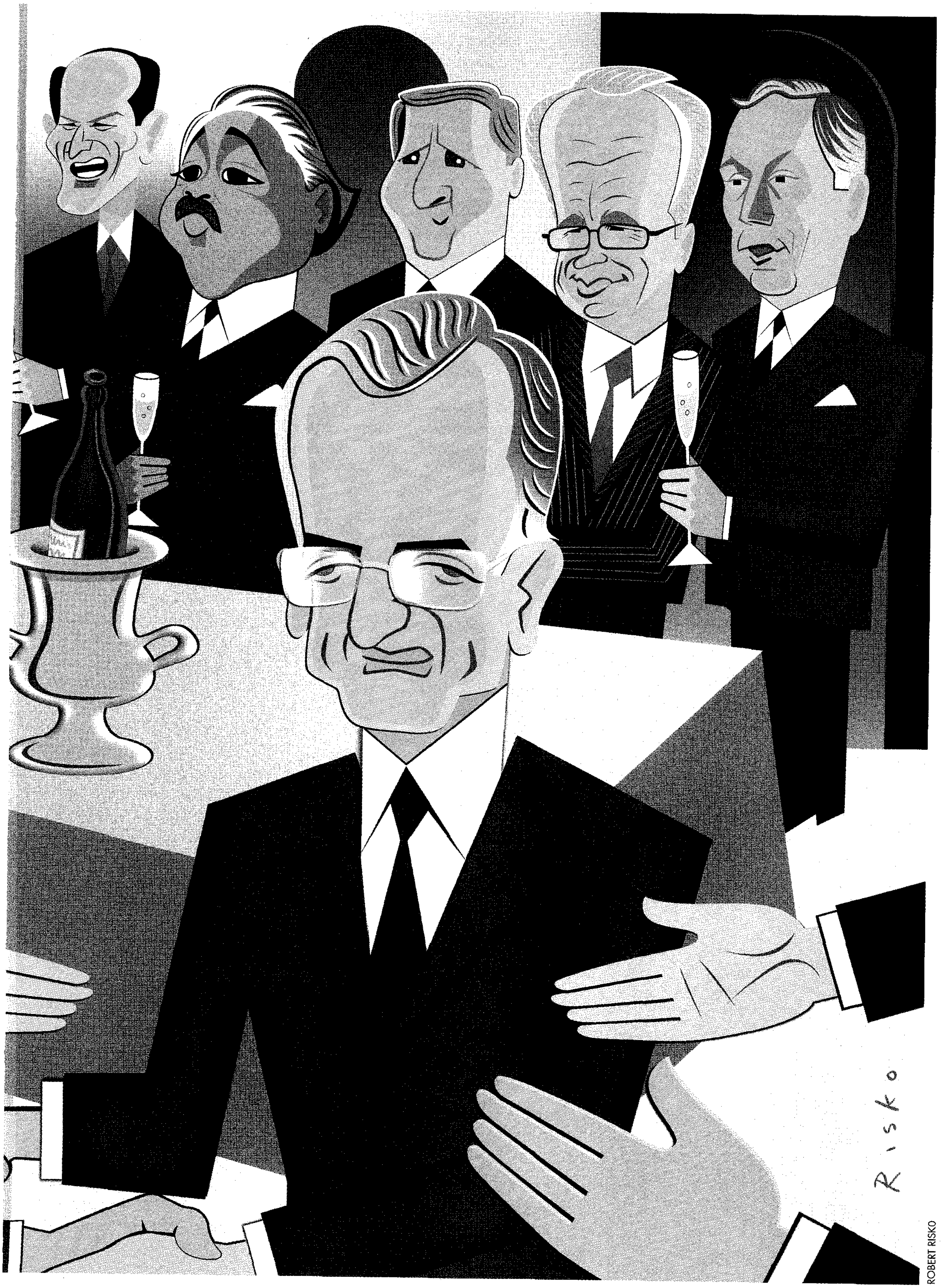
For some of the most prominent New Yorkers (and some of the dubious ones as well), Rubenstein, who is seventy-five, quietly helps control the damage and put the best gloss on their disasters: the marital blowup, the business implosion, the humiliating defeat. "Public-relations specialists make flower arrangements of the facts," the late novelist-essayist Alan Harrington once observed, "placing them so that the wilted and less attractive petals are hidden by sturdy blooms." Rubenstein's clients have included George Steinbrenner, Rupert Murdoch, Donald Trump, and Leona Helmsley; the Museum of Modern Art, the Guggenheim, the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, and the Whitney Museum; BMW North America, Mount Sinai Hospital, Time Inc., Bloomberg L.P., and the notorious Lizzie Grubman. He has advised the last six mayors and the last four governors. At Rubenstein Associates, the corridors are lined with photographs of Howard's "friends" and those of Presidents stretching back to Harry Truman. In one way or another, they have all looked to Rubenstein in an hour of need. The former governor George Pataki once said that had Howard Rubenstein been around to represent rats during the bubonic plague the headlines would have read "Rodents Unfairly Accused of Mild Rash."

Howard Rubenstein is widely regarded as a public-relations expert, and that does describe much of his business, but he is perhaps above all a master of relationships, of making connections; he is a kind of lubricant of the city's gears—someone who searches for ways to make those gears mesh. Wherever he goes, there are convergences of interests and clients, as happened at a recent opening for a Picasso show at the Whitney. Rubenstein was, of course, in attendance, and after he welcomed everyone and introduced the program—a program that Rubenstein Associates had, on the Whitney's behalf, assembled—New York's senior senator (and accomplished self-publicist), Charles E. Schumer, thanked "Howard for being a great friend to me for thirty years." Rubenstein, in turn, took the opportunity to praise other notables, before ceding the podium to the Whitney's chairman, Leonard Lauder, who is also the chairman of Estée Lauder (a Rubenstein client).

Lauder later recalled for me a time several years ago when the Whitney was having trouble with city zoning and community boards, and newspaper stories



Rubenstein with Leona Helmsley, Donald Trump, Rudolph Giuliani, Eliot Spitzer, Al Sharpton, George Steinbrenner, Rupert Murdoch, and Michael Bloomberg.



ROBERT RISKO

were criticizing the museum. Lauder turned to Rubenstein, who suggested which government and community leaders to contact and urged the Whitney to expand its press relations “beyond the art press.” He also set up a meeting with the editor of the *Post* (the newspaper is another client). Rubenstein, Lauder says, “has the ability to make the connections where you never really thought any existed. These connections are subtle. He’s almost like an absolutely one hundred per cent legitimate godfather. He will help you in something because he happens to know the person to connect with. Howard built his power base based on doing small or large favors for people. . . . He has a lot of chits out there.”

The chits take many forms, from the occasional Yankees ticket to the attentions of a top surgeon; a meeting with a government official or an invitation to speak before one of the many organizations he represents or on whose board he sits. Among his chits is a reservation at his wife’s celebrated restaurant, the Peter Luger Steak House, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Each day, Rubenstein’s office holds three tables until late afternoon in case a friend calls.

Rubenstein has a special talent for bringing his clients together for their mutual benefit. The real-estate developer Donald Trump got a call from Rubenstein after Rupert Murdoch and his wife, Wendy, bought a Fifth Avenue apartment, in late 2004—Laurance Rockefeller’s former triplex—for a reported forty-four million dollars. Rubenstein asked if Trump could help the Murdochs find a rental while they were waiting for their new place to be renovated. “Howard really wanted something special for Rupert,” Trump says, and he found something suitable for the Murdochs. Everyone was happy: the Murdochs had shelter from the rain and wind, Trump had done something for the owner of a paper whose attentions he enjoys, and Rubenstein had performed another service.

Then, there are instances when two parties don’t even want to talk, except through the discreet offices of Rubenstein Associates. When Murdoch, who owns the *Post*, and Mortimer B. Zuckerman, the owner of the rival *News*, wanted to arrange a ceasefire—a way to keep their private lives out of the pages of each other’s tabloids—Rubenstein, according to a party to the discussions, was the natural broker. (Zuckerman, despite the Murdoch connection, had once hired Rubenstein to represent the real-estate company he co-founded in 1970, Boston Properties.) Lloyd Grove, who until late in 2006 wrote a gossip column in the *News*, confirms the print truce, saying, “It was communicated to me that there was a gentleman’s agreement that nothing personally critical could be written about Rupert or his family, and the understanding was that it was reciprocal.”

“I think you *would make a pretty good sacrifice.”*

In recent years, Rubenstein has become a substantial political fund-raiser, though he is careful to hedge his bets in order to avoid being seen as partisan. When George Pataki asked him to meet Dennis Hastert, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives, Rubenstein quickly agreed. In the end, Hastert recalls, “he said he liked the way I operated, that I was fair, that I was even-handed.” Rubenstein offered to host two fund-raisers for Hastert at his apartment, and he and his wife personally contributed eight thousand dollars to Hastert’s 2006 congressional campaign. Hastert told me that since then Rubenstein never “tapped on my shoulder and asked for anything. Matter of fact, the only time he asked me to do anything was to have this interview with you.” Rubenstein places his support for Hastert in a civic-minded context: “I felt that if New Yorkers gave to support Hastert it would create a more friendly environment here. And it did.”

Rubenstein has many more friends in the Democratic Party, including its left wing. “He’s the guy on any major racial disturbance or issue, who picks up the phone whether he’s involved or not, and gives advice,” the Reverend Al Sharpton told me, adding, “Howard never lies to you. Howard will say to me straight out, ‘Al, I think you’re wrong on this one.’ He doesn’t patronize you. . . . He’s almost like an understanding uncle.”

The challenges of the public-relations trade have attracted a great many wily practitioners during the hundred or so years since its birth—men and women with proficiency in sales, spin, propaganda, language, and personal relationships. It is a profession that is often regarded with skepticism. Among its pioneers was Ivy Lee, who was hired to soften the rapacious impression one had of John D. Rockefeller at the beginning of the last century. He later worked for I. G. Farben to improve Nazi Germany’s image, although his association with figures like von Ribbentrop and Hitler turned out, in the long run, to be bad for business. Edward Bernays, a nephew of Sigmund Freud's, who, like Lee, is often called the father of the trade, established his own public-relations firm in 1919. In a book called "Propaganda," Bernays wrote, "If we understand the mechanisms and motives of the group mind, is it not possible to control and regiment the masses according to our will without their knowing about it?" In the nineteen-twenties, Bernays represented the Beechnut Packing Company, which sold bacon. To spark sales, Bernays came up with the idea of promoting bacon and eggs as an alternative to coffee and toast—a breakfast that not only tasted good but was inexpensive and gave people energy. He even managed to persuade a prominent New York doctor to conduct a survey of his colleagues on the merits of a "hearty" breakfast, whose results were widely distributed by Bernays. Bernays later sold cigarettes as a weight-reduction tool, using the slogan "Reach for a Lucky instead of a sweet."

VALENTINE'S DAY
WIFE
GIRLFRIEND
SOME CELEBRITY YOU'RE STALKING
P.C. VEY

Rubenstein, though not averse to spin and stunts, is more inclined toward a personal touch—and of taking advantage of connections both obvious and hidden. "He is much more of a power broker than a public-relations man," the *News's* editor-in-chief, Martin Dunn, says. Rubenstein, he says, "sits at the middle of a very complicated web of relationships and manages to join up various parts of that web."

Rubenstein Associates occupies one and a half floors of a tall office building on Sixth Avenue between Fifty-fourth and Fifty-fifth Streets; two hundred and nine employees serve approximately four hundred and fifty clients, who pay fees of about forty million dollars annually. Giant private P.R. firms like Edelman and publicly owned companies like Burson-Marsteller or Hill & Knowlton have global clients who pay monthly fees of about half a million dollars; average monthly fees at Rubenstein, according to a senior executive there, are about ten thousand dollars, and the top rate any client pays is about seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars annually. The Rubenstein firm cannot provide the range of services offered by global companies, but the large companies cannot offer the same expertise in dealing with the peculiarities of the New York press.

The firm has always registered as a lobbying business, but Rubenstein says that his lobbying-activity revenue has dropped from about twenty per cent to about two per cent. That statistic, though, is somewhat misleading, because the distinction between traditional lobbying and the work of Rubenstein Associates is blurry. Governor Eliot Spitzer, who has known Rubenstein since he was a young man—when Rubenstein represented the real-estate business of his father, Bernard Spitzer—speaks of "the distinction between a lawyer who's a lawyer and a lawyer who's a counsellor. He's tried to position himself as somebody whose advice goes beyond how do you simply deal with the inquiry from a reporter and it becomes more, How do you position yourself in a larger context of maintaining the image that is important for a business, or an individual, or a brand name, or a family?"

That is pretty much how Rubenstein views himself. He dislikes being seen as "a short-order cook" churning out press releases, an art form that was more or less invented by Ivy Lee a century ago. "I see myself leading, with my sons, a communications business that is not merely a publicists' haven," Rubenstein says. One can easily imagine his soothing appeal, the emergence of the sympathetic Uncle Howard, when he explains, "I always ask a person, if they're in a difficult spot, 'What is your good name worth?' I'm here to protect their good name."

George Arzt, who was a political reporter for the *Post* and press secretary to Mayor Edward I. Koch and now runs his own P.R. firm, recently watched Rubenstein come to the rescue of someone's good name—in this case, that of Lord Richard Rogers, the British architect who had contracts for a number of New York projects, including the redesign of the Javits Center and the expansion of Silvercup Studios, in Queens. Last February, Rogers lent his London office to a group called Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine, who discussed the possibility of boycotting architects and construction firms building Israel's separation barrier and West Bank settlements, saying in a statement that they were "complicit in social, political, and economic oppression." The British press reported these statements, and when New York officials like Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver and Representative Anthony Weiner learned about them they demanded that Rogers's New York government contracts be cancelled; other Jewish leaders chimed in, and editorials followed.

Rogers, who had billions of dollars' worth of projects at stake, said that he had nothing to do with the group and had left the office before the discussion took place. "I can't begin to tell you how terrifying this was," he told me. Frantic, he called friends in America asking for advice, and they uniformly recommended that he hire Rubenstein, whom he had never heard of. When the two spoke, Rubenstein said, "I don't think I will be able to get you out of this mess," but they agreed nevertheless to meet that Sunday at New York's Four Seasons Hotel.

At the hotel, Rogers told Rubenstein that his wife was Jewish, that his grandparents were Jewish, that he had completed projects in Israel—and that he was dumbfounded by the whole affair, because he disagreed with the resolution. Rubenstein pointed out that the controversy had been building in the British press for two weeks and that Rogers had remained silent. Rogers explained that he had been in the hospital recuperating from a serious operation, and was unaware of the controversy.

"I believed him," Rubenstein says. He began to make calls to anyone who could help, including the leaders of an umbrella group called the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; Rubenstein is not a member, but he is an adviser to the Jewish Community Relations Council and as such attends conference meetings. He told them that he had just had a cathartic session with Rogers, and put Rogers on the line. "Whenever he phoned anybody, they all answered," Rogers recalled.

A meeting was arranged. Friends warned Rubenstein that it would be tough for Rogers, and Rubenstein advised Rogers to denounce the resolution passed by the architects, which he did. He arranged for Rogers to be interviewed by the *Post*, where Rogers was quoted as saying, "Hamas must renounce terrorism." Next, Rogers went to the headquarters of the Jewish Community Relations Council, to a meeting attended by Silver, Weiner, and representatives of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. For more than an hour, Rogers fielded questions; Rogers left when they debated what to do, but Rubenstein was invited to stay. The group decided that Rogers was "naïve," not mendacious. Rubenstein helped to organize a press conference to announce their decision. The *News*, which was set to run a piece by Ed Koch denouncing Rogers, killed the column. "I have no doubt it was worked out by Rubenstein," Koch says, admiringly, although he still doesn't believe that Rogers absolved himself. Silver says that no one but Rubenstein could have orchestrated that meeting.

George Arzt, reflecting on the event, says, "P.R. in this town is nothing more than connecting the dots to the right people. You're paid for your experience." Rubenstein, looking back, abandoned his customary modesty and said of Rogers, "In a matter of a week, I helped reverse a disaster for him." Of Rubenstein, Rogers said, "He's just like a magician. He makes things disappear."

In recent years, Rubenstein Associates' crisis-management business has burgeoned, and its increase coincides with the expansion of the tabloid press—not only in print but on the air and online. When the marriages of Donald Trump, Ronald Perelman, and other New York plutocrats turned ugly, Rubenstein was summoned to minimize the damage. He was called for advice in 1996, when Kathie Lee Gifford was embarrassed by reports that child labor in Third World countries was being used to manufacture a clothing line that bore her name, and when the sportscaster Marv Albert was accused of an unusual erotic biting habit, and when Michael Jackson was engaged in one of his many litigations. When Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York, lost her standing in the British Royal Family, Rubenstein took her on as a client and introduced her to another client, Weight Watchers, and she became their spokeswoman.

But the hole dug by a client may sometimes be so deep that Rubenstein is not equal to the task. Last November, when the comedian Michael Richards went on a racist-sounding rant during his night-club act, Richards's friend Jerry Seinfeld and his wife, Jessica, called Rubenstein's son Steven to ask if he could help. Richards had already appeared on David Letterman's program, presumably to apologize, but his muddled performance left viewers unconvinced. Howard Rubenstein coached Richards; he arranged for him to appear on the radio show of his friend Jesse Jackson, and to apologize directly to his friend Al Sharpton—counting on Sharpton to tell the world. That seemed to work—until Rubenstein made the hole deeper by suddenly announcing to reporters that Richards was Jewish. Richards is not and never has been Jewish, and when Rubenstein was asked, he said that he had been told this by Richards—but that his client now said that he *felt* Jewish. Richards has since been unavailable for comment. "He wants to rest," Rubenstein volunteered to the press. "He's been talking to his psychiatrist."

Rubenstein's signature client in recent years has been George Steinbrenner, the owner of the Yankees. For decades, Steinbrenner—the Boss, as he loved to be called—did not hesitate, when the spirit moved him, to ridicule his players and abuse his managers. He once called the pitcher Hideki Irabu "a fat pussy toad" and paid a professional gambler to dig up dirt on the outfielder Dave Winfield, and he had fired a succession of managers. Until recently, Steinbrenner was, like Trump, one of the city's sacred monsters, capable of saying almost anything. Then he vanished, and in his stead were ghostly anodyne quotes attributed, of course, to his spokesman, Howard Rubenstein. When the Yankees had a losing streak, Steinbrenner now said, through his spokesman, that he was "disappointed," or even, "I have tremendous faith in my players, my manager, and the leadership of the team." Requests for interviews with Steinbrenner, so often granted in the past, were now invariably denied. "Rubenstein is good at coming up with irrelevant, obfuscating responses," the *Times'* longtime baseball columnist Murray Chass wrote. "For instance, when asked about a year ago if Steinbrenner had sustained a medical setback, Rubenstein responded, 'George lifts weights every day.' "

This description of a hale and vigorous Steinbrenner did not correspond with what reporters believed to be reality. They saw a frail man of seventy-six slowly getting into his car at Yankee Stadium; they saw Steinbrenner seemingly dazed by the summer heat at the groundbreaking for the new Yankee Stadium. One reporter who covers the Yankees, and who does not want to risk his access, told me, "I've known George for thirty

RECUPERATION FROM THE DEAD LOVE THROUGH CHRIST AND ISAAC BABEL

If you spend all night reading Babel and wake on an island
metropolis on your raft bed under a patent-leather sky
with the stars pecked out, you may not sense
the presence of Christ, the Red Cavalry having hacked up
all those Poles, the soldiers hugging each other
with their hatchets. This morning, my ex-man
is a caved-in box of disposable razors to ship back.
He wore a white Y on his baseball cap. Night
was a waterfall down his face.
Marry me meant *You're a life-support system*
for a nice piece of ass, meant *Rent*
this space. Leaving the post office, I enter
the sidewalk's gauntlet of elbows. All around me,
a locust buzz as from the book of Job. Yet I pray, I
pray: Christ my Lord, my savior,
and my good brother, sprinkle me
with the blood of the lamb. Which words
make manifest his buoyancy in me.
If the face of every random pedestrian is prayed for,
then the toddler in its black pram
gnawing a green apple can become Baby Jesus.
And the swaggering guy in a do-rag idly tossing an orange
into the crosswalk's air might feel Heaven's winds
suck it from his grasp as offering.
Maybe the prospect of loss—that potential emptiness
granted his hands—lets him grin so wide at me.
His gold teeth are a sunburst.
When the scabby man festooned with purple rags
shoulders an invisible rifle to shoot him, he pirouettes,
clutching his chest. Light applause follows
his stagger to the curb. The assassin bows.
These are my lords, my saviors, and my good brothers.
Plus the Jew Isaac Babel, who served the Red Calvary,
yet died from a bullet his own comrade chambered.
That small hole in his skull
is the pit on the map we sailed from.

—*Mary Karr*

years, and on the elevator he sometimes doesn't recognize me." He added, "How has Rubenstein helped him? The statements are a joke. He makes George look like some cartoon version of the cartoon version he used to be."

One could argue that Rubenstein has helped to turn Steinbrenner into a more benign and even sympathetic figure. But mainly he has shielded an aging man from public view with a series of ventriloquisms and, at best, half truths. Richard Sandomir, who writes about television sports for the *Times*, said that he has not been able to speak with Steinbrenner for about three years. "All my conversations are with Rubenstein," Sandomir said. "I like Howard a lot. . . . But few of his quotes match George's personality. Is he taming him, or just creating a new George? No one knows."

When I asked to talk with Steinbrenner in person or on the telephone, his assistant, Judith Wells, e-mailed me, saying, "Speaking from personal experience, Mr. Steinbrenner becomes a wee bit impatient on the telephone and he will spend a lot more time reflecting if he can respond via the written word." Two weeks later, I received a personal letter signed by Steinbrenner. I had asked for an example of good advice that Rubenstein had given, and he wrote, "Perhaps the best advice that he's given me is to stay 'composed' and say 'less.' " How did he feel about suggestions that he was enfeebled and that Rubenstein was inventing a new Steinbrenner? "Not very positively." I have no idea if that was authentic Steinbrenner or pure Rubenstein. Rubenstein, for his part, insists that he told the truth when he said that Steinbrenner was still lifting weights: "It's true. Next time you're here, I'll put you on the phone and you'll hear him breathing."

Rubenstein, it is clear, is engaged in an epistemological high-wire act that is played out in the columns of Cindy Adams, Liz Smith, Richard Johnson, et al., rather than in philosophical journals. One assumption appears to be that, without a lucid definition of what constitutes truth, it is easier to function with a clean conscience. Rubenstein says that he makes no distinction between a fib and a lie—"A fib is a lie," he says—and, understandably, he feels under no obligation to volunteer everything to a reporter. But he also seems to acknowledge that some fibbing is part of the job. If, say, someone is fired for incompetence, he believes it's perfectly acceptable to say that the person is leaving to explore new opportunities or for family reasons. "It depends on your definition," Rubenstein says. "If your left foot has a corn and your right foot doesn't, you put your right foot forward. That's a pretty good definition of what a P.R. person does."

Two years ago, Cindy Adams wrote about a dinner at Peter Luger that included herself, Randy Levine, the Yankees president, and Rubenstein, to whom she referred as Mandrake the Magician. In her column for the *Post*, Adams wrote that she had been promised an exclusive story—that the Yankees were about to sign the star pitcher Randy Johnson—and recounted how during the meal Levine's cell phone kept ringing, and Levine kept telling sports reporters that it was mere "rumor." Rubenstein said to Levine, "Tell them to call me." A moment later, Adams continued, Ruben-

"Can we start over? Like, from 1987, say?"

stein's cell phone rang, and she described what happened this way:

> "Really?" says Mandrake into the mouthpiece. "You actually heard Randy Johnson is signing on with the Yankees? This is very interesting. How did you hear this? . . . I don't know anything about this, but you know I've always leveled with you, so I tell you what I'll do. I'll check it out. Let me see if I can find Randy Levine. What's your number?"
>
> He does not jot down said number because his writing hand is wrapped securely around his red wine glass. Even now, that poor yutz is probably still hunched over a phone awaiting confirmation.

"That wasn't a lie," Rubenstein said when I asked about the column. "That was three friends having a jocular good time. She knew what was happening." Adams agrees that once the story got out they had a jolly time. "I understood they were being truthful to me," she says. But she believed that they were lying to the reporters: "Yes, of course they were. I revelled in what was happening, knowing perfectly well I was going to skewer them the next day."

Not everyone, though, finds such incidents amusing; for some, it was a clear demonstration of dishonesty by Rubenstein. "He lies all the time," an executive who has worked with Rubenstein closely through the years said. He later added, "Everyone lies. But not everyone touts their integrity on their sleeve."

• • •

When Howard Rubenstein was a child, his authority came from his brawn. Born in 1932 in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn, he grew up in a two-family stucco house, with a basement filled with barbells. Photographs show a young man with bulging biceps and a tough-guy countenance. He got into a lot of fights. His immediate neighborhood was Jewish, but two blocks away, across Nineteenth Avenue, it was mostly Italian. He remembers with pride some of his schoolyard brawls. "No one messed with me," he boasts.

Ada Rubenstein, Howard's mother, who came to the United States from Russia when she was nine, dominated the household. She pushed her son and daughter to get good grades, telling Howard, "You can be anything you want, but I want you to be a lawyer." Howard's father, Sam, a Brooklyn native, worked as a police reporter for the Standard News Association, a wire service for city newspapers. Ruby, as he was called, was popular with the cops and politicians and even with the mobsters he wrote about, because, his son told me, he was a gentleman. "If I said, 'I'm Ruby's son,' they opened doors."

In his P.S. 247 yearbook from 1944, his sister June wrote, "May you always look at the world through rose-colored glasses." Howard believes that he still sees the world that way. (June, a retired schoolteacher and nurse, now lives in Florida.) From his mother, he thinks he got his "strong will," and from his father a certain gentleness of character. "He never raised his voice," Rubenstein recalled. "His style is the style I adopted."

By the time Howard graduated, from Midwood High School, he had stopped fighting, and his grades were good enough to get him into the University of Pennsylvania, where he jettisoned his Bensonhurst look, joined a fraternity, and studied economics. Pushed by his mother, Howard applied to every law school in the Ivy League, albeit without much enthusiasm. Harvard Law School accepted him, but within two months he had dropped out and moved back home. It was too adversarial, he thought—and only one side won. "I wanted the other guy to feel they got something decent," he says. His father suggested that he get into the newspaper business as a copyboy, but Howard was put off by the starting salary of thirty-five dollars a week. Like some reporters in those days, Sam Rubenstein did public relations on the side. He suggested that his son give it a try. That sounded interesting to Howard, and his father helped him find his first client: the Menorah Home and Hospital for the Aged and Infirm.

Sam taught Howard how to write speeches and press releases and how to pitch stories to reporters. Howard rented a small office in downtown Brooklyn, and landed his second client, an architect and assemblyman named Vito P. Battista, who crusaded against property taxes and became a perennial (if unsuccessful) seeker of the mayoralty. Howard began devising publicity stunts. To showcase Battista's complaint that Mayor Robert F. Wagner's budget oppressed homeowners, he rented a camel and had it appear at a press conference draped with a sign that read "Wagner's Budget: The Straw That Will Break the Home Owner's Back." For a wool manufacturer, he hired three unsheared sheep and had an associate walk up Eighth Avenue with them, getting citations from the police and attracting huge crowds. The novelty, and the tickets, generated more publicity. Yet the stunts, and the thirty dollars a month that many clients paid, made Rubenstein feel ambivalent about this line of work. "I didn't think P.R. was a profession," he said. "It was looked down upon."

Howard decided to give law school another try, and in 1956 he enrolled in night classes at St. John's University. This time, he got his degree and passed the bar, and in 1959 the enduring Brooklyn congressman Emanuel Celler (he served nearly fifty years in the House) helped him get a job as the assistant counsel to the House Judiciary Committee. It took Rubenstein six months to decide yet again that the law was too adversarial, and he returned once more to Brooklyn—and public relations. He had recently married Amy Forman, a Barnard senior whose family had bought the Peter Luger Steak House in 1950. Their first child, a daughter, Roni, was born in 1961, followed by David in 1962, Richard in 1965, and Steven in 1969. As a young public-relations executive, Rubenstein attended a lecture given by Edward Bernays, and remembers being impressed by his professional ancestor, who on that day stressed the importance of devising a strategy for clients.

Howard's breakthrough probably came with his first Manhattan real-estate client, Morris Morgenstern, who paid him a hundred and fifty dollars a month plus bonuses to generate good press. "Always look for the human element," Sam Rubenstein had advised his son. So when Howard learned that Morgenstern, whose parents had died at an early age, considered himself an orphan, and that he enjoyed singing, he arranged for him to perform at a Jewish orphanage on a Jewish holiday. The attention so delighted Morgenstern that he offered to donate five thousand dollars to a charity of Rubenstein's choice—if he could attract that level of press coverage again. Former President Harry Truman was in town, and Rubenstein fearlessly telephoned his hotel, somehow getting through to make his offer: five thousand dollars to the Truman Library if the President would appear with Morgenstern to accept the donation. Truman agreed, and Howard Rubenstein had greased his first big wheel.

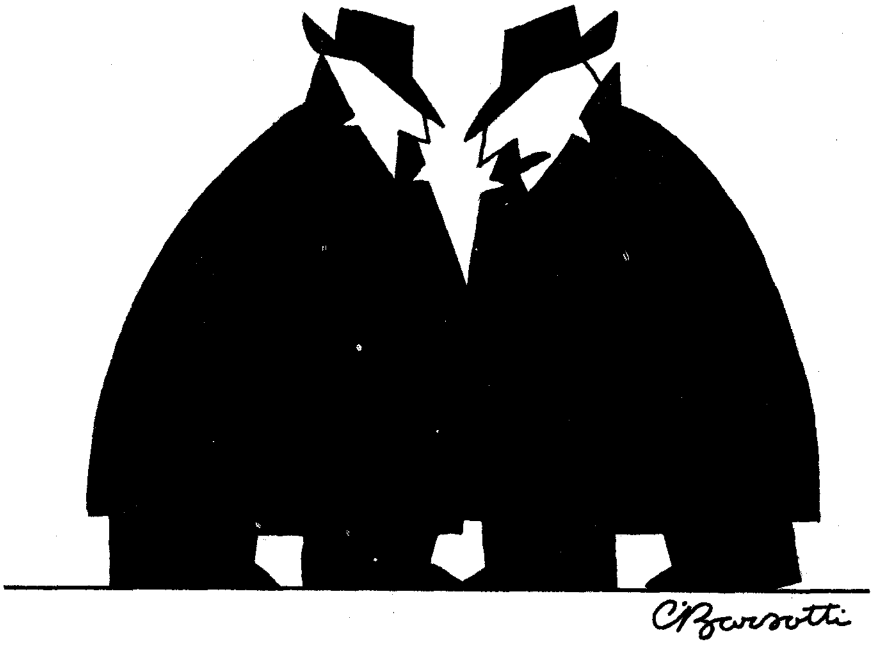
Rubenstein, enmeshed in local politics, recruited many Brooklyn politicians as clients, including Representative Hugh Carey, Comptroller Abraham Beame, and Assemblyman Stanley Steingut. These three would one day become, respectively, governor, mayor, and Assembly speaker. At the time, though, Rubenstein says that he began to worry that he would be pigeonholed as a Brooklyn flack, if not worse. He still recalls a political dinner when an inebriated local Democratic judge shouted, "Hey, you guys! I'm not going to fix any tickets anymore!"

Brooklyn's economic base was eroding. The Dodgers had moved to Los Angeles. Crime was up. Middle-class residents were heading for the suburbs. Rubenstein was determined to broaden his client list, and in the early sixties he opened an office in the Woolworth Building, in lower Manhattan.

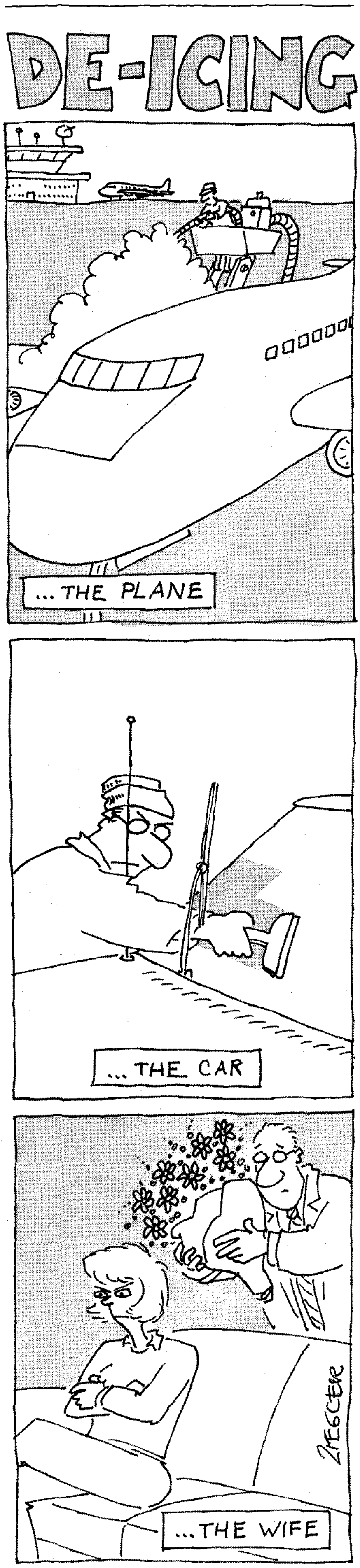
Although Rubenstein called himself a Democrat, he was politically ambidextrous. In 1965, he volunteered to help the Democrat Abe Beame in his bid for mayor, but when Beame lost to John Lindsay, the Republican-Liberal, Rubenstein didn't want to be left out. David Garth, a political media consultant who worked for various mayoral and gubernatorial candidates, including Lindsay, remembers spotting Rubenstein around City Hall: "He's a *schmeickler*—a guy who plays around the edges. But he was good in the sense that if you needed to get something done he knew somebody everywhere."

Sam Rubenstein, who by then was covering crime for the *Herald Tribune*, introduced Howard to one of the city's top real-estate lawyers, Abraham (Bunny) Lindenbaum, who in turn introduced him to some of his clients, including Fred Trump, Donald's father, who built major housing complexes in Brooklyn and Queens. Most important, he introduced him to Lewis Rudin, who, with his brother Jack, was taking command of the real-estate giant that bore the family name. Rudin invited Rubenstein to meetings of a new organization, the Association for a Better New York—ABNY, as it is called—which would play an important role in the economic revival of the city in the mid-seventies and eighties. "That opened every door in real estate," Rubenstein recalls. It opened government doors as well. The interests of Mayor Lindsay and ABNY were aligned, Jay Kriegel, Lindsay's chief of staff, recalled, and City Hall saw Rubenstein as "an honest broker," someone who brought people together.

The most significant event of that time for Rubenstein, however, was personal: the second of his and Amy's four children, David, died a slow death from a brain tumor in 1971, when he was nine years old. "I sought solace by plunging into my business around the clock, and Amy and I became closer," Rubenstein said. He had also come to realize that his relationship with his clients had changed. He consciously went from



"I got nothin'."



"order taker" to strategist, he said—the Bernays lesson. "I started to talk to my clients in a different way, asking, 'What are your goals?' "

Rubenstein was on hand in 1973, when Beame ran for mayor again and won. Beame's four-year term coincided with a new City Council law requiring municipal lobbyists to disclose the names of their clients. As it turned out, no one did more city lobbying than Rubenstein Associates, which led to charges of political influence. Rubenstein had to balance the interests of such clients as the Uniformed Sanitationmen's Association and the United Federation of Teachers with the interests of the Mayor, who negotiated with the unions. And when their interests collided Rubenstein frequently mediated, prompting a rival, the late John Scanlon, to remark that Rubenstein must have undergone "an ethical bypass," and that he was "the greatest carrier of water on both shoulders since Rebecca at the well." (In response, Rubenstein says, "If you're a mediator, and you've disclosed that, that's not an 'ethical bypass.' That's a bridge over the pass.")

More than once, however, Rubenstein was forced to drop a client because of conflicts. Hugh Carey was elected governor in 1974, and later it was revealed that four state agencies had paid Rubenstein a total of a hundred and ninety thousand dollars for public-relations advice. Rubenstein said that he had done nothing wrong, but he conceded that the contracts raised questions, and he resigned the accounts.

Rubenstein's ubiquity was now a fact of New York life. He began to represent Rupert Murdoch shortly after Murdoch bought the *Post*, in 1976. Then, as now, Murdoch was attacked by critics of his generally conservative politics and brand of tabloid journalism; the *News* columnist Jimmy Breslin called him "Tar Baby Murdoch" and went after Rubenstein as well, calling him "a cheap hack flack." Murdoch remembers, "I called his wife and told her Howard should resign my account, that I was ruining his business. He called back and said, 'Never.' That's loyalty."

Murdoch transformed the *Post* from a liberal afternoon paper to a pugnacious conservative competitor of the morning *News*. His paper was never profitable—annual losses would eventually reach tens of millions—but, because it was a swaggering opposition voice in a Democratic city, its owner came to play a prominent role in New York politics. The *Post* blamed Beame for New York's growing fiscal crisis, and in the 1977 mayoral election Beame lost a primary contest to then Congressman Ed Koch, who was endorsed by the *Post*. Rubenstein, meanwhile, had backed another losing candidate, Mario Cuomo, a friend and fellow St. John's graduate. The campaign was unusually nasty, or so the candidates thought, with rumors that Koch was gay and that Cuomo had ties to the Mob.

Koch, who had once been seen as a reliably liberal congressman based in Greenwich Village, campaigned as a reformer who would tame the city's excesses, including some of "the special interests" represented by Rubenstein's real-estate and union clients. Soon after he moved into City Hall, however, Koch told me that he "noticed that I'm listed to attend almost every new construction project in town—and these were all Howard Rubenstein clients." What Koch learned was that Rubenstein "cultivates the people around you. He became great friends with Diane Coffey, who ran my office." Koch went to groundbreaking ceremonies for Rubenstein clients, because he "wanted the world to know that New York City was building again," and the press showed up because the Mayor was there. "He was using me," Koch said, laughing. "But I was using him." Eventually, Koch decided that Rubenstein was irresistible—a "very likable guy."

Koch and Cuomo had a rematch in the Democratic gubernatorial primary to succeed Hugh Carey, in 1982. "I stayed out of it. I was close to both of them," Rubenstein, who made contributions to both men, said. After Cuomo won, and defeated the Republican candidate in the general election, Rubenstein set out to help bridge the relationship between Cuomo and Koch. "He's a natural reconciler," Cuomo said, adding that he couldn't recall a single instance when Rubenstein pressed his own views. "If he had them, he probably would not share them," Cuomo says. "Reconciliation requires a certain amount of not unattractive blandness."

Rubenstein did once offer an opinion to Koch—in 1986, when a Koch ally, Queens Borough President Donald R. Manes, committed suicide after his corrupt practices became public. Rubenstein insisted on taking Koch to lunch.

"He knows I'm suffering," Koch recalled. "I could hardly get out of bed." At lunch, Rubenstein leaned forward and told the despondent Koch, "You know, there isn't anybody who could get through this crisis but you. Nobody could. And the reason you will come through this crisis is that everybody knows of your integrity and no one believes you are in any way involved." Koch believed he was sincere. "But whether he was or wasn't—I believe he was—it certainly shows a sensitivity," he said. The former mayor added, with a Kochian cackle, "It certainly didn't hurt him with me in terms of coming to his press conferences!"

In 1989, Rubenstein supported Koch for what would have been a fourth term, but also supported another friend, Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, who challenged Koch. Rubenstein, as was now his custom, raised money for both candidates. "I'm not always neutral," he said, "but if two good friends are running why not be neutral? I don't want to be a warrior." On the night of the primary, Rubenstein showed up at Koch headquarters, where, as a senior Koch aide recalls, Rubenstein said, "I just want to wish Ed the best, because I have to go downtown to David Dinkins' hotel." On the same night, Rubenstein made a third stop—at the headquarters of former United States Attorney Rudolph Giuliani, where he congratulated Giuliani on *his* victory in the Republican primary. Rubenstein unapologetically confirms the three visits. Was he hedging his bets? "I don't place bets," he says.

Dinkins won the general election, and faced Giuliani again in 1993. After Giuliani won, a Giuliani aide told Rubenstein, "You can't come into City Hall"—a threat that struck at the heart of Rubenstein's self-regard as a civic leader. It could also be bad for business. Rubenstein called the real-estate developers Jerry Speyer and Bernard Mendik, who were friends and clients as well as Giuliani fund-raisers, and they in turn called City Hall. Soon, the new mayor was on the phone. "I said I wanted a meeting," Giuliani recalled, and he summoned his deputies to a meeting that included Rubenstein. "I introduced him to everybody, and said, 'He's someone who's welcome here. He's someone I want you to call on and ask for advice.' " In 1995, Rubenstein put on a fund-raiser for Giuliani that brought in two hundred thousand dollars.

In 1999, when Giuliani mounted a campaign against an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum of Art, saying it was "sick stuff" and threatening to cut off city support, the museum turned to its paid adviser, Howard Rubenstein, for help. That same day, Rubenstein resigned the Brooklyn Museum account. "I didn't particularly care for the art work," he says. "It was a controversy, and I didn't want to get caught in the middle of it. And I respected Rudy."

Not wanting to get caught in the middle is typical of Rubenstein. When I asked Giuliani to describe Rubenstein's views, he said that Rubenstein had strong feelings about the State of Israel and New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage, but he could not remember a conversation about taxes, the size of government, or any other issue. "When I talked to him about welfare, I didn't know if he agreed with me on welfare, but he was trying to help me figure out how to communicate my views better," Giuliani said. "His advice was 'Talk about it in terms of how much you care about people. You're not just doing it to save money.' " Rubenstein, with a satisfied smile, says, "For eight solid years, we were good friends."

At the state level, when George Pataki defeated Mario Cuomo for governor, in 1994, Rubenstein faced another access challenge, albeit briefly. "I had really bonded with Cuomo," Rubenstein recalls. "And when he became governor I had an open phone and an open door." Soon enough, Pataki's office door, too, swung open. "I was close to a lot of people around him," Rubenstein says, a not altogether surprising circumstance. He won the new governor's trust, Pataki told me, because the Governor valued Rubenstein's "wisdom and experience" and saw him as a man who kept confidences.

Soon after Pataki's election, Rubenstein increased his donations to state and national Republicans. In the 2004 election cycle, the Rubenstein family handed out a total of a hundred and twenty-two thousand dollars in campaign contributions, spread among both parties. He gave a hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars in the 2006 election. His ecumenical support for government officials is no business ploy, Rubenstein insists. He finds all these open doors satisfying, he says, because "I like to like people. I look for the good parts of people. And I enjoy the reciprocity. I don't deny that. The reciprocity of good feeling is something that I thrive on."

To get Rubenstein to say a bad word about a public figure, you'd have to torture him. One day in his office (we sat near a windowsill lined with hard hats from various groundbreaking ceremonies), I asked him to name a mayoral hero. He rarely gestures when he speaks, but he was expansive about "each one's heroic efforts."

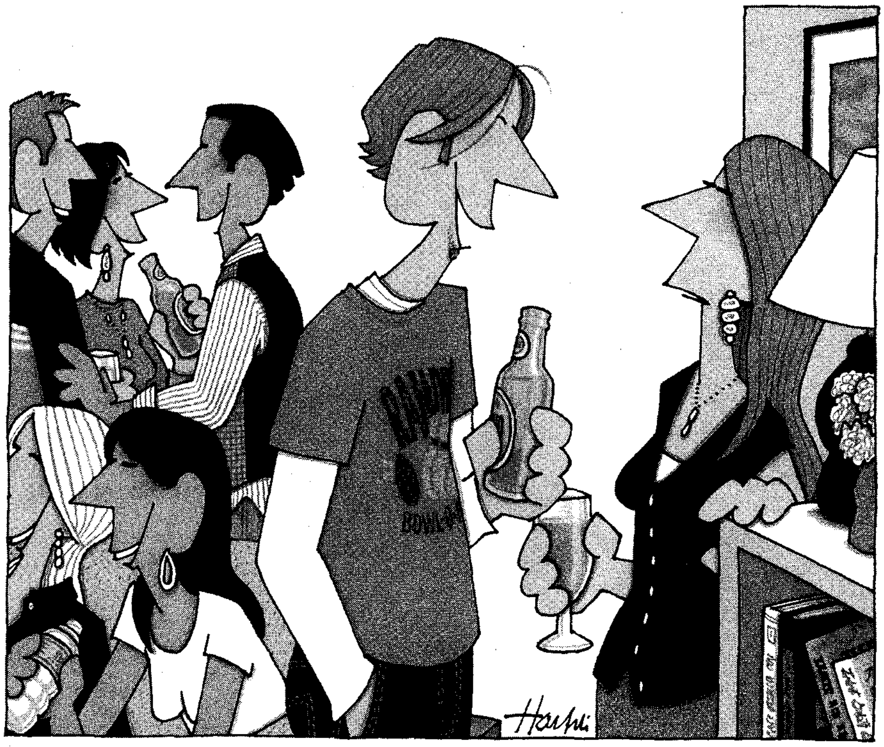
Where did Beame fail as mayor? "His failure was not understanding the true nature of the criticism that was being levelled at him during the near-collapse of the city. . . . Yet he did a lot." What were Koch's weaknesses? "I truthfully haven't seen a weakness. . . . I love Ed Koch." Dinkins? "I am not critical of David Dinkins. Not only is he one of my best friends but he brought honor and pride to the African-American community." Giuliani? "I think he'll acknowledge that his weakness was his personal life, where he was criticized. But that's his personal life, as far as I'm concerned. I look on him as a hero."

And so on. When I asked if there was a politician or a political cause that Rubenstein felt especially passionate about, he replied, "I feel passionate about supporting the people who are in office in the city and state—I have less to do with the national government. I feel passionate about helping them be the best they can. And if it means I sound Pollyanna-ish at times, so be it."

When Rubenstein leaves the office, at 6 P.M. or so, he takes along a call list of just under five hundred names—clients, journalists, and politicians that he deals with, plus a list of calls that he has to return. "Each name reminds me of things I need to do," he says. He stars names of people to call, or he puts a large "D" alongside them as a reminder to dictate a note. At about 11 P.M., the out-of-town edition of the *Post* is delivered to his door. He gets up at around four-thirty, works, and catches up on the news until six, when he wakes his wife. Most days, Howard and Amy head out for a jog of up to three miles around the Reservoir. By eight, it's either a business breakfast or the office. When Howard has a business function in the evening, Amy usually comes with him. Every Friday night, the Rubensteins—children, in-laws, aunts, uncles, and four grandchildren—gather for a Sabbath dinner. "Saturday is Amy's day," Howard says. They usually attend a matinée at the Metropolitan Opera, or spend an evening at the Philharmonic or the theatre. Sunday is a workday, though Rubenstein views work cheerfully, as recreation. His son Steven says, "One thing I envy in him is how happy he is all the time."

The Rubensteins give a dinner every few months for a cross-section of about twenty prominent New Yorkers. One might find the Governor of New York or New Jersey, Mayor Michael Bloomberg, a senator, businessmen like Murdoch and Jeffrey Kindler, the C.E.O. of Pfizer, the president of Columbia University, the editors of the *Post*, the *News*, or *Time*, the chairman of Fox News, the Manhattan District Attorney, an athlete, the F.B.I.'s agent-in-charge of the New York office, or the Duchess of York. After the entrée is cleared, Rubenstein will clink his glass, introduce a subject, and then orchestrate a discussion by giving everyone in the room a chance to speak. Bloomberg says, "Howard makes everyone feel at home. He watches during dinner to make sure no one is sitting there looking away from the person next to them."

Amy Rubenstein, along with her sister Marilyn Forman Spiera and a niece, oversee the Peter Luger restaurant business—work that includes visits to meat markets, where they inspect loins of beef, making sure that the meat has ample marbling, that it is the right color (pink, not dark or spotted with red), that the steaks are large (from cows of between eight hundred and a thousand pounds), and that the bones are intact so that the meat is not exposed to bacteria. Each week, they select about twenty-five thousand pounds of steak for two restaurants (a second Peter Luger opened in Great Neck, in 1960). The Rubensteins keep a kosher home, but they make an exception for a Peter Luger porterhouse.

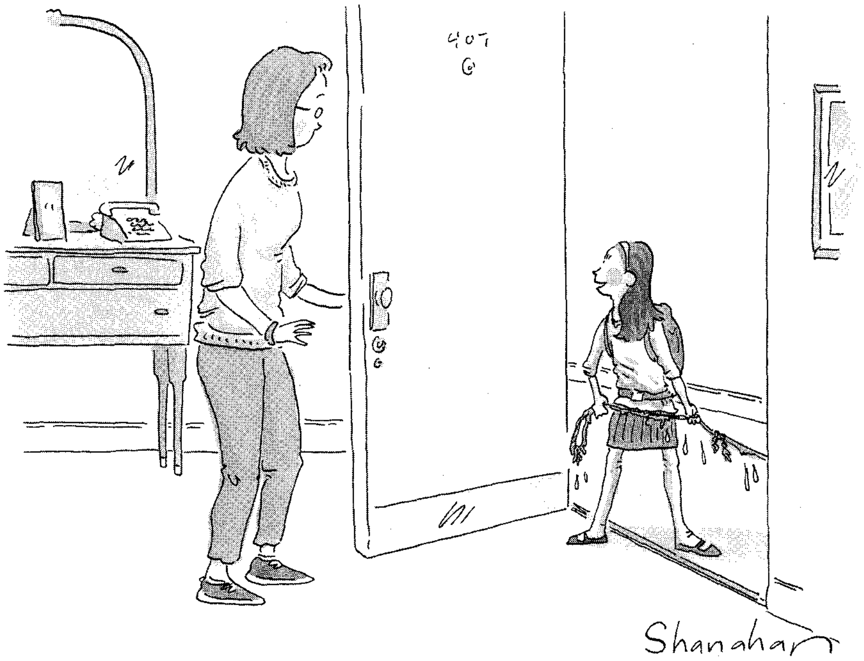


"I'm sort of a Renaissance dude."

William C. Rudin, the son of Lewis Rudin, first met Rubenstein as a boy; he is now president of the Rudin real-estate empire. Like his father, he relies on Rubenstein at ABNY, where he is chairman, and at Rudin Management Company. When asked if anything puzzles him about Rubenstein, he says, "How is he able to represent two opposing forces and still remain friends with everybody? To some degree, it's a mystery."

Watching Rubenstein effortlessly glide from Democrats to Republicans, one might easily conclude that there is no mystery—that he is simply slippery. But the people who take his advice seem genuinely to like him—"He makes you feel like you're the most important person and he's helping you," says Tim Zagat, who, with his wife, Nina, created the popular restaurant guides that bear his name. Roger Ailes, the chairman of Fox News, sees Rubenstein's role as "the experienced uncle." Edward Cardinal Egan, the Archbishop of New York, cited Rubenstein's pro-bono work for Catholic Charities; he calls him "a man of quiet wisdom, never boastful." Even when Rubenstein makes a request, Sheldon Silver observed, he does so subtly: "He may say, 'So-and-so is going to call you. Listen to him.' That's it." Or, he adds, "He'll call up and say, 'There's an event tonight. Be nice if you go.' "

Others believe that the key to his influence rests almost solely with his client list—and the broader the list gets, the more power he accumulates. "He has high-powered friends, and, in my life in government and my political life, getting access is sometimes very difficult," Joseph L. Bruno, the State Senate majority leader, says. When Al Sharpton wants to get a message to Rupert Murdoch, he says, "I'll call and talk to Howard about it and start to explain our point of view." It doesn't bother Eliot Spitzer that Rubenstein was an adviser to Pataki. "His business is to be close to people," Spitzer says. "His business is to be sufficiently close and trusted such that when he wants to be an intermediary and wants to say something that is not for public consumption, you



"I found him in the East River—can I keep him?"

will know that he is reliable. It's because his self-interest is in protecting that credibility, which is his greatest asset, that I can trust him."

For David Garth, Rubenstein's secret is that he never seems to be selling anything. "He doesn't knock your door down," Garth says. "He doesn't come across as a starving man." Yet Garth believes that Rubenstein always masks his angle, which is this: "Everything he does is for business." The columnist Murray Kempton once referred to Rubenstein as the "barker for all that moves and shakes in the coalition of the benign and malign whose tent houses New York's commercial circus."

Lee Bollinger, the president of Columbia University (also a client), has a different explanation for Rubenstein's ability to win the trust of so many disparate people: "A number of years ago, I got to know Arthur Miller. I've always been fascinated by the issues of tolerance. I was talking to Miller about it, and he had just written a play with an international airline pilot as the leading character. He said to me, 'I've always liked international airline pilots, because they fly into some place and it's completely different, and they fly someplace else and it's completely different. They're just very tolerant people. They've seen a lot of the world, and their experiences just make them a more tolerant, open person.' " Bollinger thought this was true of Rubenstein as well. "What probably makes Howard somewhat unique is that while he does have his own viewpoints, I'm sure, he is able to have a more humanist or humane understanding of the world." And if someone asked, "Where's his belief system?" "This is part of the great paradox of tolerance," Bollinger replied.

Rubenstein presides over a business that changes swiftly, and to the outside world he is synonymous with his company. It is natural to wonder whether a smaller firm like Rubenstein's will have the resources to keep pace with speeded-up news cycles that make it all the harder to control an image. "They are a local firm," Peter Himler, the founder of the P.R. and media consulting firm Flatiron Communications, observes. "But New York is the media capital of the world, so they enjoy a big-brand reputation. But the capabilities they offer are not as broad as other agencies." Richard Edelman, the president of the giant company started by his father, Daniel Edelman, sees Rubenstein as "our industry's best version of Felix Rohatyn," the investment banker who brought business and labor leaders and others together to help rescue New York from potential bankruptcy in the mid-seventies. "He sits at the center of many intersecting forces, whether it's sports, entertainment media, culture, business, finance. He's much more than a classic P.R. man."

Edelman does not address what Rubenstein Associates will become when, inevitably, Howard Rubenstein is no longer in charge, but he acknowledges that the transfer of power from one generation to the next is difficult. For Edelman, who became C.E.O. a decade ago, when he was forty-two, there were normal tensions between a father and son who inevitably view their business from different generational perspectives. Daniel Edelman, who is now eighty-six, is still chairman. "I have to keep him very much informed," Richard says.

The Rubensteins' daughter, Roni, a former assistant district attorney who is forty-six, now concentrates on raising three children. Richard, who is forty-one, runs Rubenstein Public Relations, one of two affiliates of Rubenstein Associates; among Richard's clients are Donald Trump and Zeckendorf Development. Although Richard is a close adviser to his father, he seems to have chafed under his father's authority. "He was very demanding of me," Richard says. "I thought that I would be better off to make my own mistakes and gain my own sense of confidence." Richard's younger brother, Steven, who is thirty-seven, runs Rubenstein Communications, Inc., the other affiliate. His business, too, is a smaller version of the firm that his father guides, but Steven is intimately involved in every aspect of the business as his father's unofficial chief operating officer. He is seen as the likely successor. Steven has also opened up some sectors that his father never focussed on, in particular the movie business and national corporations. His clients include Amazon.com, Paramount, and "Late Show with David Letterman." ("When I'm arrested, he's the first person I call!" Letterman says of Steven.) But neither son has the long-term relationships with public officials that their father has. Howard Rubenstein, for his part, is not about to step down. In a confiding, almost avuncular tone, he says, "I have one attitude. What I do I want to be good for New York—as well as for my business." ♦

PROFILES

TWO HEADS

A marriage devoted to the mind-body problem.

BY LARISSA MACFARQUHAR

It's a little before six in the morning and quite cold on the beach. It's low tide, and the sand is wet and hard-packed and stony. This early on a Sunday, there are often only two people here, on the California coast just north of San Diego. Patricia Churchland is throwing a rubber ball into the ocean for her two dogs (Fergus and Maxwell, golden retrievers) to fetch. Her husband, Paul Churchland, is standing next to her. They are both wearing heavy sweaters. They are in their early sixties. They are tall—she is five feet eight, he is six feet five. They come here every Sunday at dawn.

Pat is constantly in motion, throwing the ball, stepping backward, rubbing her hands together, walking forward in a vigorous, twitchy way. She has pale eyes, a sharp chin, and the crisp, alert look of someone who likes being outside in the cold. (Even when it is sunny, she looks as though she were enjoying a bracing wind.) She seems younger than she is: she has the anxious vitality of a person driven to prove herself—the first to jump off a bridge into freezing water. Paul stands heavily, his hands in his pockets. He is still. He nudges at a stone with his foot. He looks up and smiles at his wife's back. He has a thick beard. He looks like the sort of person who finds it soothing to chop his own wood (and in fact he is that sort of person).

Paul and Pat met when she was nineteen and he was twenty, and they have been married for almost forty years. They are both Canadian; she grew up on a farm in the Okanagan Valley, he, in Vancouver. They have two children and four grandchildren. They live in Solana Beach, in a nineteen-sixties house with a small pool and a hot tub and an herb garden. Each summer, they migrate north to a tiny island off the Vancouver coast. Both are professors of philosophy at the University of California at San Diego. They have been talking about philosophy together since they met, which is to say more or less since either of them encountered the subject. They test ideas on each other; they criticize each other's work. At this point, they have shaped each other so profoundly and their ideas are so intertwined that it is impossible, even for them, to say where one ends and the other begins. Their work is so similar that they are sometimes discussed, in journals and books, as one person. Some of their theories are quite radical, and at the start of their careers the Churchlands were not always taken seriously: sometimes their ideas were thought silly, sometimes repugnant, verging on immoral. In those days, they formed a habit of thinking of themselves as isolates aligned against a hostile world, and although they are now both well established in their field, the habit lingers.

"For the first twenty-five years of our career, Pat and I wrote only one paper together," Paul says, "partly because we wanted to avoid—"

"We wrote more than that," Pat says.

"Together? I thought 'Stalking the Wild Epistemic Engine' was the first."

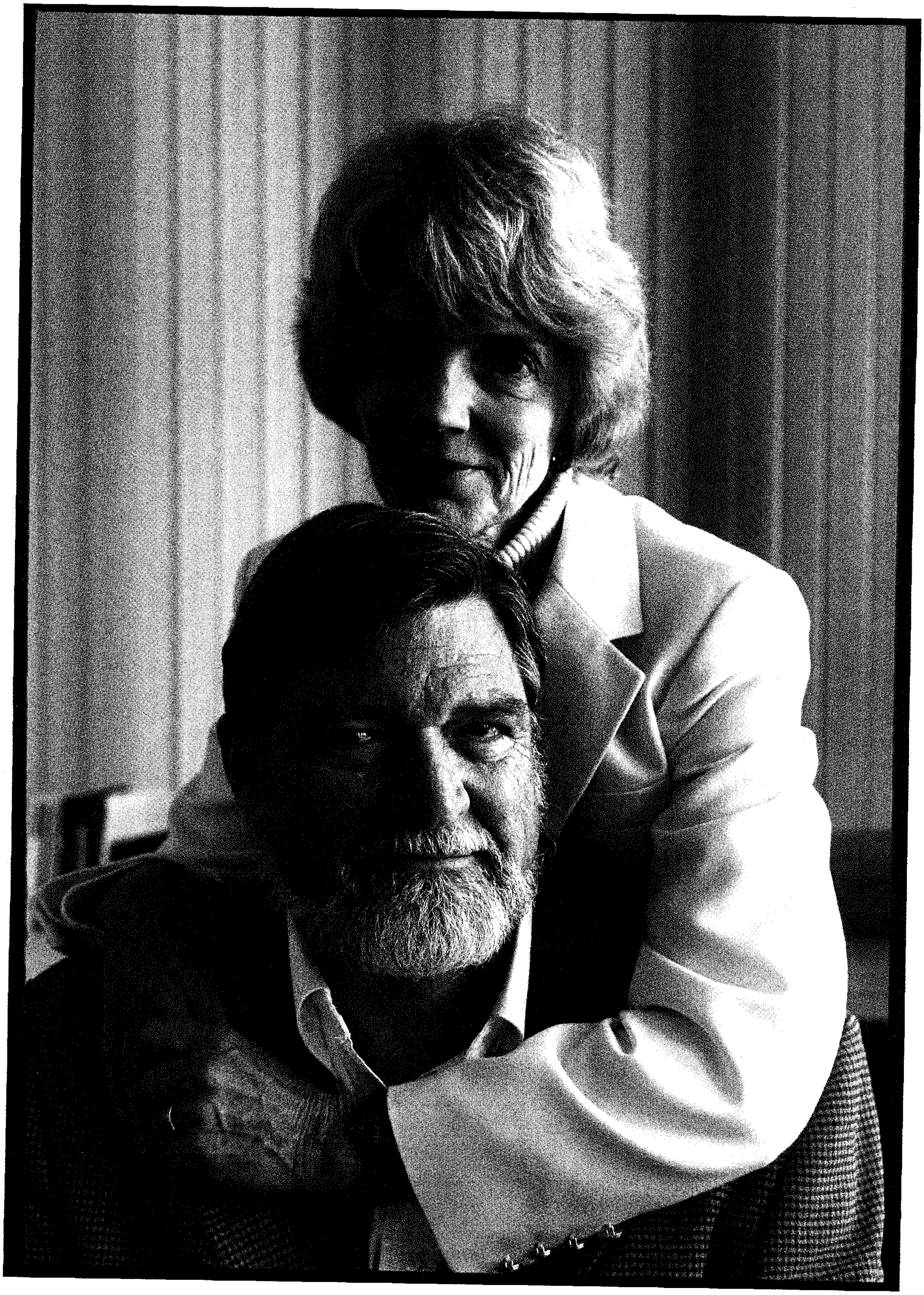
"There was 'Functionalism, Intentionality, and Whatnot.'"

"O.K., so there's two. In the early stages, when Pat wrote her papers she said, 'Paul, you really had a lot of input into this, should we put your name on it?' I'd say, 'No, I don't want people saying Pat's sailing on Paul's coattails.'"

The guiding obsession of their professional lives is an ancient philosophical puzzle, the mind-body problem: the problem of how to understand the relationship between conscious experience and the brain. Are they different stuffs: the mind a kind of spirit, the brain, flesh? Or are they the same stuff, their seeming difference just a peculiarly intractable illusion? And if they are the same stuff, if the mind is the brain, how can we comprehend that fact? What can it possibly mean to say that my experience of seeing blue is *the same thing* as a clump of tissue and membrane and salty liquid?

Think of some evanescent emotion—apprehension mixed with conceit, say. Then think, That feeling and that mass

Paul and Patricia Churchland helped persuade philosophers to pay attention to neuroscience. Photographs by Steve Pyke.



of wet tissue—*same thing*. Or think of the way a door shutting sounds to you, which is private, inaccessible to anyone else, and couldn't exist without you conscious and listening; that and the firing of cells in your brain, which any neuroscientist can readily detect without your coöperation—*same thing*. The terms don't match, they don't make sense together, any more than it makes sense to ask how many words you can fit in a truck. That is the problem.

In the past, it seemed obvious that mind and matter were not the same stuff; the only question was whether they were connected. Everyone was a dualist. In the seventeenth century, Leibniz thought that mind and body only appeared to interact because God had established a perfectly synchronized harmony between them (an ingenious theory impossible to refute). Descartes believed that the mind was composed of a strange substance that was not physical but that interacted with the material of the brain by means of the pineal gland. Nowadays, few people doubt that the mind somehow is the brain, but although that might seem like the end of the matter, all that's necessary to be clear on the subject, it is not. It is not enough to imagine that the brain *houses* the mind (in some obscure cavity, perhaps tiny intracellular pockets), or *gives rise to* the mind (the way a television produces an image), or *generates* the mind (a generator producing current): to imagine any of those things is to retain the idea that the mind and the brain are distinct from each other. The trick is to remove the verb that separates them. The problem is not one of knowledge; the problem is our obdurate, antediluvian minds that cannot grasp what we believe to be true.

Some philosophers think that we will never solve this problem—that our two thousand years of trying and failing indicate that it's likely we are no more capable of doing so than a goat can do algebra. Others believe that someday a conceptual revolution will take place, on a par with those of Copernicus and Darwin, and then all at once it will be clear how matter and mind, brain and consciousness, are one thing. Paul and Pat Churchland believe that the mind-body problem will be solved not by philosophers but by neuroscientists, and that our present knowledge is so paltry that we would not understand the solution even if it were suddenly to present itself. "Suppose you're a medieval physicist wondering about the burning of wood," Pat likes to say in her classes. "You're Albertus Magnus, let's say. One night, a Martian comes down and whispers, 'Hey, Albertus, the burning of wood is really rapid oxidation!' What could he do? He knows no structural chemistry, he doesn't know what oxygen is, he doesn't know what an element is—he couldn't make any sense of it. And if some fine night that same omniscient Martian came down and said, 'Hey, Pat, consciousness is really blesjeakahgjfdl!' I would be similarly confused, because neuroscience is just not far enough along." Philosophers have always thought about what it means to be made of flesh, but the introduction into the discipline of a wet, messy, complex, and redundant collection of neuronal connections is relatively new. Nowadays, it seems obvious to many philosophers that if they are interested in the mind they should pay attention to neuroscience, but this was not at all obvious when Pat and Paul were starting out, and that it is so now is in some measure due to them.

"I don't know if it's me or the system, but it seems harder and harder to make a mockery of justice."

The Churchlands like to try, as far as possible, not only to believe that they themselves are thoroughly physical creatures but also to *feel* it—to experience their thoughts as bodily sensations. They have never thought it a diminishment of humanness to think of their consciousness as flesh—quite the opposite. And they are monists in life as they are in philosophy: they wonder what sort of organism their marriage is, its body and its mental life, beginning when they were unformed and very young—all those years of sharing the same ideas and the same dinners. When they met, Paul and Pat were quite different, from each other and from what they are now: he knew about astronomy and electromagnetic theory, she about biology and novels. But as time went on they taught each other what they knew, and the things they didn't share fell away. Their family unity was such that their two children—now in their thirties—grew up, professionally speaking, almost identical: both obtained Ph.D.s in neuroscience and now study monkeys. Paul sometimes thinks of Pat and himself as two hemispheres of the same brain—differentiated in certain functions but bound together by tissue and neuronal pathways worn in unique directions by shared incidents and habit. This is not a fantasy of transparency between them: even one's own mind is not transparent to oneself, Paul believes, so to imagine his wife's brain joined to his is merely to exaggerate what is actually the case—two organisms evolving into one in a shared shell.

"It's funny the way your life is your life and you don't know any other life," Pat says. "I don't know what it would have been like if I'd been married to—"

"A patent lawyer?"

"Something like that. It's hard for me to imagine."

"I think the two of us have been, jointly, several orders of magnitude more successful than at least I would have been on my own," Paul says. "I'd like to understand that better than I do; I presume it's got something to do with the brain. You could say, well, we exchanged a lot of oxytocin, but that's probably one per cent of the story." (Oxytocin is a peptide produced in the body during orgasm and breast-feeding; when it is sprayed into the noses of experimental subjects, they become more trusting and coöperative.) "To what extent has Pat shaped my conceptual framework and hence my perceptions of the world, and to what extent have I done that for her? I think the answer is, an enormous extent. But I don't know how to unwind it."

"We've been married thirty-six years, and I guess we've known each other for forty-two or something like that. That's a long time."

"Thirty-seven years. Weren't we married in '69? Almost thirty-eight."

"That is a long time."

The tide is coming in. A few more people have arrived at the beach—there are now a couple of cars parked next to the Churchlands' white Toyota Sequoia. Pat and Paul walk up toward the road. The dogs come running out of the sea, wet and barking.

Pat Churchland grew up in rural British Columbia. Her parents owned an orchard—in the summer the Okanagan Valley is hot enough for peaches. "We used to regale people with stories of life on the farm because they thought it was from the nineteenth century," Pat says.

"You had chickens, you had a cow," Paul says.

"We didn't have an indoor toilet until I was seven. We had a two-holer, and people actually did sit in the loo together. I know it seems *hilarious* now."

When Pat was a teen-ager, she worked in a fruit-packing plant. Neither of her parents was formally educated past the sixth grade. In her understanding of herself, this kind of childhood is very important. To her, growing up on a farm in the middle of nowhere means that you have no patience for verbiage, you are interested only in whether a thing works or not. And if it doesn't work you had better figure out how to fix it yourself, because no one is going to do it for you.

When Pat went to college, she decided that she wanted to learn about the mind: what is intelligence, what it is to reason, what it is to have emotions. She found that these questions were not being addressed in the first place she looked, psychology—many psychologists then were behaviorists—but they were discussed somewhat in philosophy, so she started taking philosophy courses. She met Paul in a Plato class, her sophomore year. She soon discovered that the sort of philosophy she was being taught was not what she was looking for. At the time, in the nineteen-sixties, Anglo-American philosophy was preoccupied with language—many philosophers felt that their task was to untangle the confusions and incoherence in the way people spoke, in the belief that disagreements were often misunderstandings, and that if our concepts were better sorted out then our thinking would also be clearer. This held no great appeal for Pat, but one thing led to another, and she found herself in philosophy graduate school at the University of Pittsburgh. The department was strong in philosophy of science, and to her relief Pat found people there who agreed that ordinary language philosophy was a bit sterile. At Pittsburgh, she read W. V. O. Quine's book "Word and Object," which had been published a few years earlier, and she learned, to her delight, that it was possible to question the distinction between empirical and conceptual truth: not only could philosophy concern itself with science; it could even be a kind of science.

After a year, she moved to Oxford to do a B.Phil. Philosophy at Oxford at the time was very far from Pittsburgh—quite conservative, not at all empirically oriented. Nobody seemed to be interested in what she was interested in, and when she tried to do what she was supposed to she was bad at it. It was all very discouraging. She was beginning to feel that philosophy was just a lot of blather. "The idea seemed to be that, if you analyzed your concepts, somehow that led you to the truth of the nature of things," she says. "It was just garbage." She was about to move back to Canada and do something else entirely, maybe go into business, but meanwhile Paul Churchland had broken up with the girlfriend he'd had when they were undergraduates and had determined to pursue her. He came over to Oxford for the summer, and they rented a little house together on Iffley Road. Paul had started thinking about how you might use philosophy of science to think about the mind, and he wooed Pat with his theories.

At Pittsburgh, where he had also gone for graduate school, he had learned to be suspicious of the intuitively plausible idea that you could see the world directly and form theories about it afterward—that you could rely on your basic perceptions (seeing, hearing, touching) being as straightforwardly physical and free from bias as they appeared to be. He concluded that we cannot help perceiving the world through the medium of our ideas about it. It's not just a matter of what we pay attention to—a farmer's interest might be aroused by different things in a landscape than a poet's—but of what we actually *see*. In the course of that summer, Pat came to look at philosophy quite differently. "I stayed in the field because of Paul," she says. "Gradually, I could see all kinds of things to do, and I could see what counted as progress." Philosophy could actually change your experience of the world, she realized. And if it could change your experience of the world then it had the potential to do important work, as important as that of science, because coming to see something in a wholly different way was like discovering a new thing.

Paul didn't grow up on a farm, but he was raised in a family with a practical bent: his father started a boat-works company in Vancouver, then taught science in a local high school. His mother took in sewing.

"I guess I have long known that there was only the brain," Pat says.

"When you were six years old?" Paul says.

"Well, no, of course not."

“Charles is based on an old Ukrainian folktale.”

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“I remember deciding at about age eleven or twelve, after a discussion with my friends about the universe and did God exist and was there a soul and so forth,” Paul says. “I’d been skeptical about God. My parents weren’t religious. I would ask myself, What do you think thinking is? And I’d say, I guess it’s just electricity.”

Paul as a boy was obsessed with science fiction, particularly books by Robert Heinlein. He vividly remembers “Orphans of the Sky,” the story of a young man named Hugh Hoyland. Hugh lives in a world called the Ship, which is run by scientists—all except for the upper decks, where it is dangerous to venture because of the mutants, or “muties,” who live there. One day, Hugh is captured by an intelligent two-headed mutie named Joe-Jim, who takes him up to the control room of the Ship and shows him the sky and the stars. All at once, Hugh realizes that what he had been told were inscrutable religious metaphors were in fact true: the Ship is not the whole universe after all but merely a thing inside it, and it is actually making some sort of journey. He tries to explain this to the scientists, but they tell him he is talking nonsense. How could the Ship move when the Ship is all there is? “Orphans of the Sky” is a classic philosophical fable, a variant of Plato’s story about prisoners in a cave who mistake shadows cast on the wall for reality. Its moral is not very useful for day-to-day work, in philosophy or anything else—what are you supposed to do with it?—but it has retained a hold on Paul’s imagination: he always remembers that, however certain he may be about something, however airtight an argument appears or however fundamental an intuition, there is always a chance that both are completely wrong, and that reality lies in some other place that he hasn’t looked because he doesn’t know it’s there.

Paul’s father had a woodworking and metal shop in the basement, and Paul was always building things. He planned eventually to build flying saucers, and decided that he was going to be an aerodynamical engineer. He stuck with this plan when he got to college, taking courses in math and physics. But the summer after his first year he found himself hanging around with a group of friends who could make sophisticated arguments about the existence of God. Paul was at a disadvantage not knowing what the ontological argument was, and he determined to take some philosophy classes when he went back to school. Although he was trained, as Pat was, in ordinary language philosophy, by the time he graduated he also was beginning to feel that that sort of philosophy was not for him. When he got to Pittsburgh, Wilfrid Sellars became his dissertation adviser. In the mid-nineteen-fifties, a few years before Paul became his student, Sellars had proposed that the sort of basic psychological understanding that we take for granted as virtually instinctive—if someone is hungry, he will try to find something to eat; if he believes a situation to be dangerous, he will try to get away—was not. Concepts like “beliefs” and “desires” do not come to us naturally; they have to be learned. Nor were they simply descriptive: we do not see beliefs, after all—we conjecture that they are there based on how a person is behaving. No, this kind of ordinary psychological understanding was something like a theory, a more or less coherent collection of assumptions and hypotheses, built up over time, that we used to explain and predict other people’s behavior.

In writing his dissertation, Paul started with Sellars’s idea that ordinary or “folk” psychology was a theory and took it a step further. If folk psychology was a theory, Paul reasoned, it could turn out to be wrong. It had happened many times, after all, that understandings that felt as fundamental and unshakable as instincts turned out to be wrong. Our folk geology—the evidence of our eyes and common sense—told us that the earth was flat, and while it still might look that way we accepted that it was an illusion. Our folk biology told us that if we slammed a hand in a door we would feel pain at the point of contact—and, while we still felt pain in the hand, we now knew that the pain signal had to travel away from the hand to the brain before we experienced it. Folk psychology, too, had suffered corrections; it was now widely agreed, for instance, that we might have repressed motives and memories that we did not, for the moment, perceive. Surely it was likely that, with progress in neuroscience, many more counterintuitive results would come to light. How probable was it, after all, that, in probing the brain, scientists would come across little clusters of “belief” neurons? It wasn’t that beliefs didn’t exist; it was just that it seemed highly improbable that the first speakers of the English language, many hundreds of years ago, should miraculously have chanced upon the categories that, as the saying goes, carved nature at its joints. It might turn out, for instance, that it would make more sense, brain-wise, to group "beliefs about cheese" with "fear of cheese" and "craving for dairy" rather than with "beliefs about life after death."

Mental life was something we knew very little about, and when something was imperfectly understood it was quite likely that we would define its structure imperfectly, too. It was only rarely that, in science, you started with a perfectly delimited thing and set out to investigate it; more often, your definition of what it was that you were looking at would change as you discovered more about it. ("Consider the medieval physicists who wondered what fire could be," Pat says. "They identified a range of things that they thought were instances of fire: burning wood, the sun, comets, lightning, fireflies, northern lights. They couldn't give a definition, but they could give examples that they agreed upon. Jump now to the twentieth century. The category of fire, as defined by what seemed to be intuitively obvious members of the category, has become completely unstuck. Turns out that burning wood is actually oxidation; what happens on the sun has nothing to do with that, it's nuclear fusion; lightning is thermal emission; fireflies are biophosphorescence; northern lights are spectral emission.")

Why, Paul reasoned, should we assume that our everyday psychological notions are any more accurate than our uninformed notions about the world? Why should we suppose introspection to be infallible when our perception is so clearly fallible in every other way? Paul speculated that it might, someday, turn out that a materialist science, mapping the structure and functions of the brain, would eliminate much of folk psychology altogether. Some folk categories would probably survive—visual perception was a likely candidate, he thought. Attention, perhaps. Representation. But not much more than that.

Pat and Paul married in 1969 and found jobs together at the University of Manitoba, in Winnipeg.

"Winnipeg was basically like Cleveland in the fifties," Pat says. "Very innocent, very free. The kids look back on those years in Winnipeg as being . . ."

"A great bonus?"

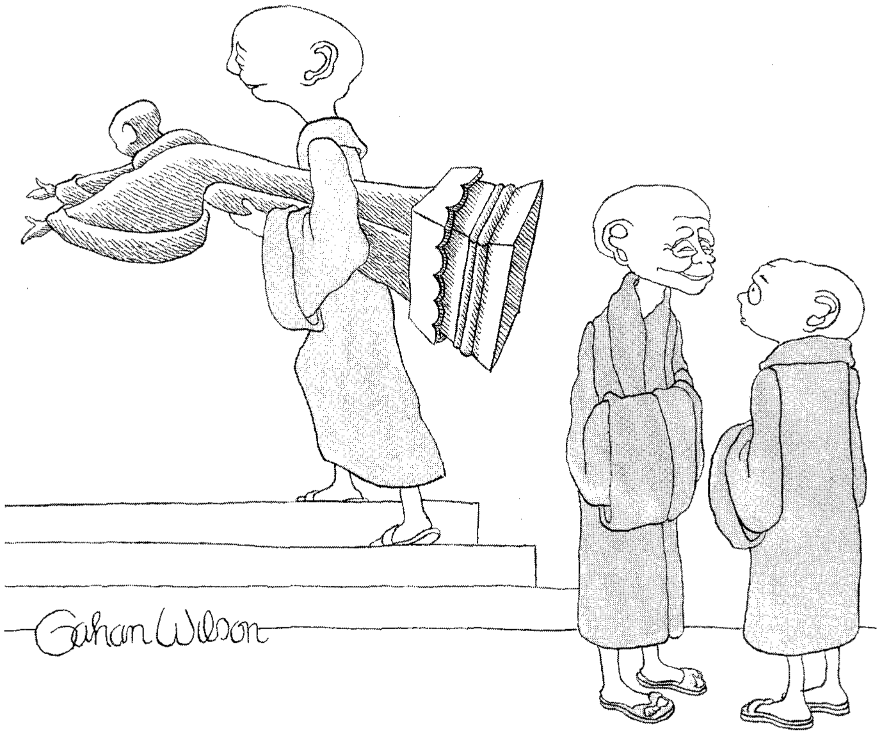
"Yes. Despite the weather. You'd just go out on your front steps and holler when it was dinnertime. You'd have no idea where they were."

"There wasn't much traffic. The kids were like a flock of pigeons that flew back and forth from one lawn to another."

The University of Manitoba was not the sort of place to keep close track of a person's publications, and, for the first time, Pat and Paul felt that they could pursue whatever they liked. Pat decided that if she was ever going to really get at the questions she was interested in she had to know more about the brain, so she presented herself to the medical school and asked permission to study neuroanatomy and neurophysiology with the medical students.

While she was at Oxford, she had started dipping into science magazines, and had read about some astonishing experiments that had been performed in California on patients whose corpus callosum—the nerve tissue connecting the two cerebral hemispheres—had been severed, producing a "split brain." This operation had been performed for some years, as a last-resort means of halting epileptic seizures, but, oddly, it had had no noticeable mental side effects. Then someone had come up with the idea of stimulating the hemispheres independently, and it had been discovered that the severing did indeed produce some rather strange results. If the word "hat," for instance, was shown only to the right side of the visual field (controlled by the verbally oriented left hemisphere), the patient had no trouble saying what it was, but if it was shown to the left (controlled by the almost nonverbal right hemisphere), he could not—indeed, he would claim not to have seen a word at all—but he could select a hat from a group of objects with his left hand.

"It was amazing that you could physically separate the hemispheres and in some sense or other you were also separating consciousness," Pat says. "In one way, it shouldn't be a surprise, I suppose, if you think that the mind is the brain. On the other hand, the fact that you can separate a sense of self—that was tremendously important. People had done split brains before, but they didn't notice anything. They thought, What's this bunch of tissue doing here—holding the hemispheres together? But you don't need that, because they're not going to go anywhere, so what is it? You had to really know the physiology and the



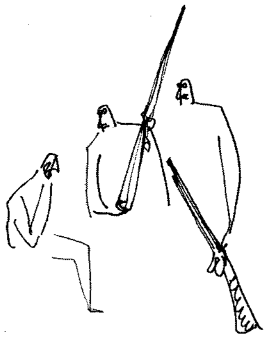
"He just won 'The Best Meaning of Life' award."

anatomy in order to ask the questions in the right way.”

“There were cases when a split-brain patient would be reading a newspaper, and, since it’s only the left brain that processes language, the right brain gets bored as hell, and since the right brain controls the left arm the person would find that his left hand would suddenly grab the newspaper and throw it to the ground!” Paul says.

“Well, it wasn’t quite like that. It wasn’t like he was surprised. It just kind of happened.”

Some of the experiments sounded uncannily like cases of spiritual possession. One patient had a pipe placed in his left hand that he could feel but not see; then he was asked to write with his left hand what it was that he had felt. His left hand began very slowly to form the letters “P” and “I”; but then, as though taken over by a ghost, the hand suddenly began writing quickly and fluently, crossed out the “I” and completed the word “PENCIL.” Then, as though the ghost had been pushed aside again, the hand crossed out “PENCIL” and drew a picture of a pipe. It seemed, the experimenters concluded, that the left hemisphere, impatient with the left hand’s slow writing, had seized control of the hand and had produced the word “PENCIL” as a guess, based on the letter “P,” but then the right hemisphere had taken over once again and corrected it. There appeared to be two distinct consciousnesses inside a person’s head that somehow became one when the brain was properly joined. Or one self torn in two.



At the medical school in Winnipeg, Pat was assigned a brain of her own, which she kept in the lab in a Tupperware pot filled with formaldehyde. Later, she observed neurosurgeries, asking the surgeon’s permission to peer in through the hole in the scalp to catch a glimpse of living tissue, a little patch of a brain as it was still doing its mysterious work. She attended neurology rounds. The first neurological patient she saw was himself a neurosurgeon who suffered from a strange condition, owing to a lesion in his brain stem, that caused him to burst into tears at the slightest provocation. He would sob and shake but at the same time insist that he was not feeling in the least bit sad. This made an impression on her, partly because she realized how it would have flummoxed a behaviorist to see this complete detachment of behavior and inward feeling and partly because none of the neurologists on the rounds were surprised. The condition, it appeared, was not all that uncommon. She encountered patients who were blind but didn’t know it. “That really kicked the slats out of the idea that you can learn very much about the nature of the mind or the nature of the brain by asking what’s imaginable,” she says. “It’s not imaginable to me that I could be blind and not know it, but it actually happens. So its being unimaginable doesn’t tell me shit!”

Each evening, after the children were in bed, she would teach Paul everything she had learned that day, and they would talk about what it meant for philosophy. They later discovered, for instance, that the brain didn’t store different sorts of knowledge in particular places—there was no such thing as a memory organ. Even dedicated areas like the visual cortex could be surprisingly plastic: blind people, and people who could see but had been blindfolded for a few days, used the visual cortex to read Braille, even though that would seem to be a thoroughly tactile activity. All this boded well for Paul’s theory that folk-psychological terms would gradually disappear—if concepts like “memory” or “belief” had no distinct correlates in the brain, then those categories seemed bound, sooner or later, to fall apart.

Gradually, Pat and Paul arrived at various shared notions about what philosophy was and what it ought to be. They agreed that it should not keep itself pure: a philosophy that confined itself to logical truths, seeing itself as a kind of mathematics of language, had sealed itself inside a futile, circular system of self-reference. Why shouldn’t philosophy concern itself with facts? Why shouldn’t it get involved with the uncertain conjectures of science? Who cared whether the abstract concepts of action or freedom made sense or not? Surely it was more interesting to think about what caused us to act, and what made us less or more free to do so? Yes, those sounded more like scientific questions than like philosophical ones, but that was only because, over the years, philosophy had ceded so much of the interesting territory to science. Why shouldn’t philosophy be in the business of getting at the truth of things?

They were confident that they had history on their side. In the classical era, there had been no separation between philosophy and science, and most of the men whom people now thought of as philosophers were scientists, too. They were thought of as philosophers now only because their scientific theories (like Aristotle’s ideas on astronomy or physics, for instance) had proved to be, in almost all cases, hopelessly wrong. Over the years, different groups of ideas had hived off the mother sun of natural philosophy and become proper experimental disciplines—first astronomy, then physics, then chemistry, then biology, psychology, and, most recently, neuroscience. Becoming an experimental discipline meant devising methods that allowed propositions to be tested that had previously been mere speculation. But it did not mean that a discipline had no further need of metaphysics—what, after all, would be the use of empirical methods without propositions to test in the first place? Philosophy could still play a role in science: it could examine the concepts that scientists were working with, testing them for coherence, and it could serve as science’s speculative branch, imagining hypotheses that were too outlandish or too provisional for a working scientist to bother with but which might, in the future, yield unexpected fruit.

In 1974, when Pat was studying the brain in Winnipeg and Paul was working on his first book, Thomas Nagel, a philosopher at Princeton who practiced just the sort of philosophy that they were trying to define themselves against, published an essay called “What Is It Like to Be a Bat?” Imagine being a bat, Nagel suggested. You are small and covered with thin fur; you have long, thin arms attached to your middle with webbing; you are nearly blind. During the day, you hang upside down, asleep,

IN SHAKESPEARE

In Shakespeare a lover turns into an ass
as you would expect. People confuse
their consciences with ghosts and witches.
Old men throw everything away
because they panic and can't feel their lives.
They pinch themselves, pierce themselves with twigs,
cliffs, lightning, and die—yes, finally—in glad pain.

You marry a woman you've never talked to,
a woman you thought was a boy.
Sixteen years go by as a curtain billows
once, twice. Your children are lost,
they come back, you don't remember how.
A love turns to a statue in a dress, the statue
comes back to life. Oh God, it's all so realistic
I can't stand it. *Whereat I weep and sing.*

Such a relief, to burst from the theatre
into our cool, imaginary streets
where we know who's who and what's what,
and command with Metrocards our destinations.
Where no one with a story struggling in him
convulses as it eats its way out,
and no one in an antiseptic corridor,
or in deserts or in downtown darkling plains,
staggers through an Act that just will not end,
eyes burning with the burning of the dead.

—James Richardson

your feet gripping a branch or a beam; at dusk you wake up and fly about, looking for insects to eat, finding your way with little high-pitched shrieks from whose echoes you deduce the shape of your surroundings. "Insofar as I can imagine this (which is not very far)," he wrote, "it tells me only what it would be like for *me* to behave as a bat behaves. But that is not the question. I want to know what it is like for a *bat* to be a bat."

The purpose of this exercise, Nagel explained, was to demonstrate that, however impossible it might be for humans to imagine, it was very likely that there was *something* it was like to be a bat, and that thing, that set of facts—the bat's intimate experience, its point of view, its consciousness—could not be translated into the sort of objective language that another creature could understand. Humans might eventually understand pretty much everything else about bats: the microchemistry of their brains, the structure of their muscles, why they sleep upside down—all those things were a matter of analyzing the physical body of the bat and observing how it functioned, which was, however difficult, just part of ordinary science. But what it is like to *be* a bat was permanently out of the reach of human concepts.

This shouldn't be surprising, Nagel pointed out: to be a realist is to believe that there is no special, magical relationship between the world and the human mind, and that there are therefore likely to be many things about the world that humans are not capable of grasping, just as there are many things about the world that are beyond the comprehension of goats. But if the bat's consciousness—the what-it-is-like-to-be-a-bat—is not graspable by human concepts, while the bat's physical makeup is, then it is very difficult to imagine how humans could come to understand the relationship between them. To describe physical matter is to use objective, third-person language, but the experience of the bat is irreducibly subjective. There is a missing conceptual link between the two—what later came to be called an "explanatory gap." To argue, as some had, that linking consciousness to brain was simply a matter of declaring an identity between them—the mind just *is* the brain, and that's all there is to it, the way that water just is H_2O—was to miss the point.

Nagel's was the sort of argument that represented everything Pat couldn't stand about philosophy. "Various philosophers today think that science is never going to be able to understand consciousness," she said in her lectures, "and one of their most appealing arguments—I don't know why it's appealing, but it seems to be—is 'I can't *imagine* how you could get pain out of meat, I can't *imagine* how you could get seeing the color blue out of neurons firing.' Now, whether you can or can't imagine certain developments in neuroscience is not an interesting metaphysical fact about the world—it's a not very interesting psychological fact about you." But when she mocked her colleagues for examining their intuitions and concepts rather than looking to neuroscience she rarely acknowledged that, for many of them, intuitions and concepts were precisely what the problem of consciousness was about. Those were the data. Most of them were materialists: they were convinced that consciousness somehow is the brain, but they doubted whether humans would ever be able to make sense of that.

Part of the problem was that Pat was by temperament a scientist, and, as the philosopher Daniel Dennett has pointed out, in science a counterintuitive result is prized more than an expected one, whereas in philosophy, if an argument runs counter to intuition, it may be rejected on that ground alone. "Given a knockdown argument for an intuitively unacceptable conclusion, one should assume there is probably something wrong with the argument that one cannot detect," Nagel wrote in 1979. "To create understanding, philosophy must *convince*. That means it must produce or destroy belief, rather than merely provide us with a consistent set of things to say. And belief, unlike utterance, should not be under the control of the will, however motivated. It should be involuntary." The divide between those who, when forced to choose, will trust their instincts and those who will trust an argument that convinces them is at least as deep as the divide between mind-body agnostics and committed physicalists, and lines up roughly the same way.

When Pat first started going around to philosophy conferences and talking about the brain, she felt that everyone was laughing at her. Even thoroughgoing materialists, even scientifically minded ones, simply couldn't see why a philosopher needed to know about neurons. Part of the problem was that, at the time, during the first thrilling decades of artificial intelligence, it seemed possible that computers would soon be able to do everything that minds could do, using silicon chips instead of brains. So if minds could run on chips as well as on neurons, the reasoning went, why bother about neurons? If the mind was, in effect, software, and if the mind was what you were interested in, then for philosophical purposes surely the brain—the hardware—could be regarded as just plumbing. Nobody thought it was necessary to study circuit boards in order to talk about Microsoft Word. A philosopher of mind ought to concern himself with what the mind did, not how it did it. Moreover, neuroscience was working at the wrong level: tiny neuronal structures were just too distant, conceptually, from the macroscopic components of thought, things like emotions and beliefs.

As far as Pat was concerned, though, to imagine that the stuff of the brain was irrelevant to the study of the mind was no more than a new, more sophisticated form of dualism. Software and hardware, immaterial spirits and pineal glands—it was Descartes all over again, she would fume to Paul when she got home. This was what happened when a bunch of math and logic types started talking about the mind, she thought—they got all caught up in abstractions and forgot that humans were animals. The mind wasn't some sort of computer program but a biological thing that had been cobbled together, higgledy-piggledy, in the course of a circuitous, wasteful, and particular evolution. Yes, of course neuroscience felt pretty distant from philosophy at this point, but that was only—why couldn't people see this?—because the discipline was in its infancy. The connections hadn't been filled in yet. What she objected to was the notion that neuroscience would *never* be relevant to philosophical concerns. That seemed to her just plain stupid.

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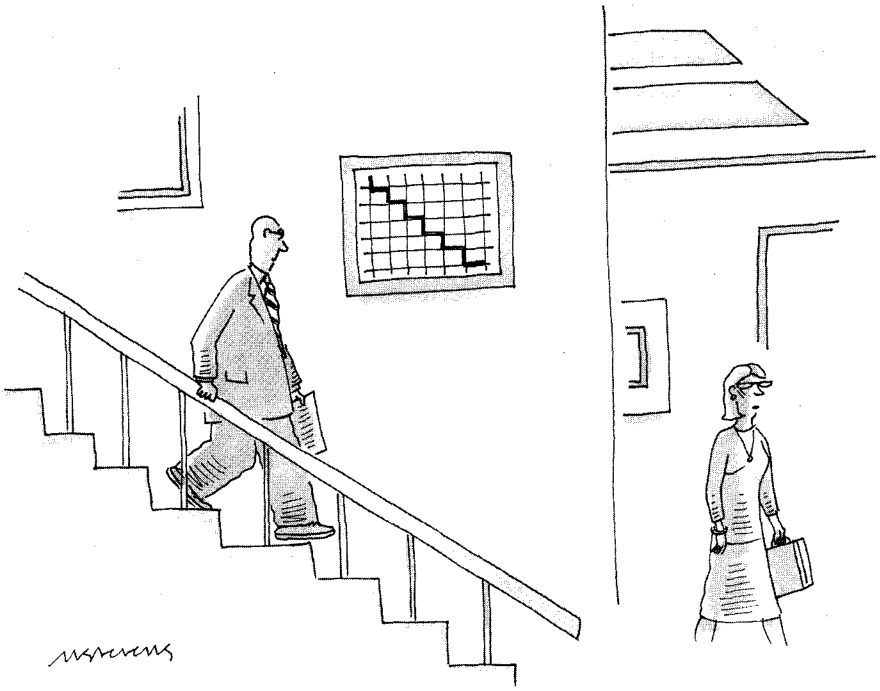
When Nagel wrote about consciousness and the brain in the nineteen-seventies, he was an exception: during the decades of behaviorism, the mind-body problem had been ignored. But then, in the early nineteen-nineties, the problem was dramatically revived, owing in part to an unexpected rearguard action launched by a then obscure long-haired Australian philosopher named David Chalmers. Chalmers is a generation younger than the Churchlands, and he is one of a very few philosophers these days who are avowedly dualist. He believes that consciousness isn't physical. It's pretty easy to imagine a zombie, Chalmers argued—a creature physically identical to a human, functioning in all the right ways, having conversations, sitting on park benches, playing the flute, but simply lacking all conscious experience. So if one could imagine a person physically identical to the real David Chalmers but without consciousness then it would seem that consciousness could not be a physical thing.

Maybe consciousness was actually another sort of thing altogether, he thought—a fundamental entity in the universe, a primitive, like mass, time, or space. This theory would be a kind of dualism, Chalmers had to admit, but not a mystical sort; it would be compatible with the physical sciences because it would not alter them—it would be an addition. As Chalmers began to develop his theory of consciousness as a primitive, the implications started to multiply. Once you had separated consciousness from biology, a lot of constraints simply disappeared. If consciousness was a primitive like mass or space, then perhaps it was as universal as mass or space. Perhaps even systems like thermostats, he speculated, with their one simple means of response, were conscious in some extremely basic way. You could start talking about panpsychism—the idea that consciousness exists, in some very basic form, in all matter, even at the level of the atom. On the face of it, of course, he realized that panpsychism sounded a little crazy. And there was a pretty good philosophical argument against it (of the customary form: either it's false or it's trivial; either you are pushed into claiming that atoms are thinking about cappuccinos or you retreat to the uninteresting and obvious position that atoms have the potential to contribute to larger things that think about cappuccinos). But he found it appealing anyway, and, despite its mystical or Buddhist overtones, it felt to Chalmers, at root, naturalistic. He liked the idea that humans were continuous with the rest of the world, even the inanimate parts of it, even stones and rivers—that consciousness penetrated very deep, perhaps all the way down into the natural order of things.

Right from the beginning, Pat was happy to find that scientists welcomed her. They certainly were a lot friendlier to her than many philosophers. When she started attending neuroscience conferences, she found that, far from dismissing her as a fuzzy-minded humanities type, they were delighted that a philosopher should take an interest in their work. At a conference in the early eighties, she met Francis Crick, who, having discovered the secret of life, the structure of DNA, as a young man, had decided that he wanted to study the other great mystery, consciousness.

"Francis discovered Pat at a meeting back East and was amazed that a philosopher had all the same prejudices that he did," Paul says. "He invited her out to the Salk Institute and, on hearing that she had a husband who was also interested in these things, invited me to come out, too. We came and spent, what was it, five days?"

"Yes, we did."



"He was still having weekly meetings with you when he knew he was dying. You would come home despairing at making headway with him."

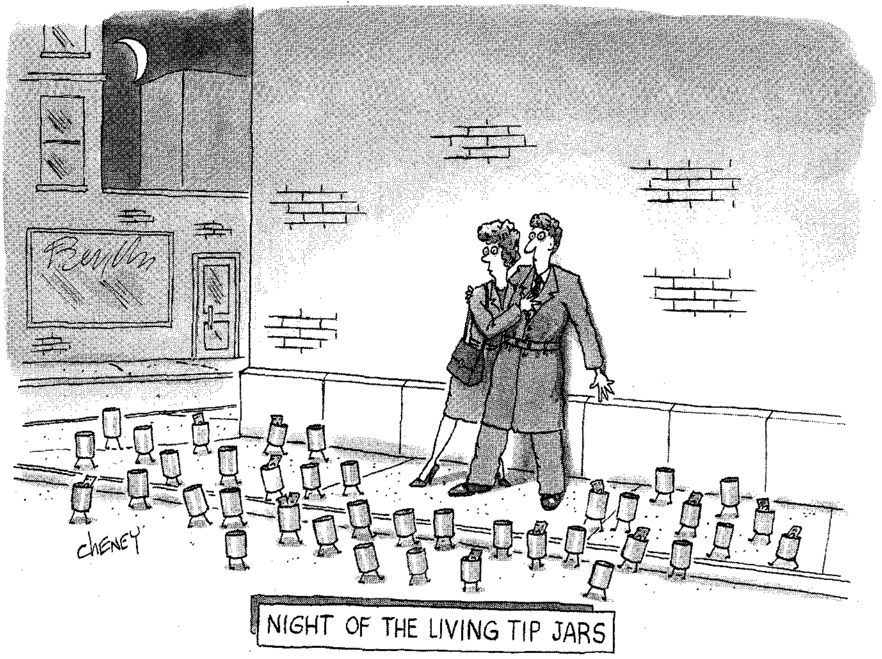
"He thought the strategy of looking for the neural correlates of consciousness was likely to be fruitful, but I became very skeptical of it. It seemed to me more likely that we were going to need to know about attention, about memory, about perception, about emotions—that we were going to have to solve many of the problems about the way the brain works before we were going to understand consciousness, and then it would sort of just fall out."

"He was one of the people who made the problem of consciousness respectable again," Paul says. "Some people in science thought that it was a ghost problem. The behaviorists thought talk of inner subjective phenomena was a waste of time, like alchemy."

"There were lots of neuroscientists who thought consciousness was such a difficult issue that we'd never get there."

The psychologist and neuroscientist V. S. Ramachandran turned up at U.C.S.D. as a junior faculty member around the same time Pat and Paul arrived. Paul met him first, when Ramachandran went to one of his talks because he was amused by the arrogance of its title—"How the Brain Works." Then Pat started observing the work in Ramachandran's lab. She saw him perform a feat that seemed to her nearly as astonishing as curing the blind: seating at a table a patient suffering from pain in a rigid phantom arm, he held up a mirror in such a way that the patient's working arm appeared in the position of the missing one, and then instructed him to move it. As if by magic, the patient felt the movement in his phantom limb, and his discomfort ceased. Pat spent more and more time at Ramachandran's lab, and later on she collaborated with him on a paper titled "A Critique of Pure Vision," which argued that the function of vision was not to represent the world but to help a creature survive, and that it had evolved, accordingly, as a partial and fractured system that served the more basic needs of the motor system.

These days, many philosophers give Pat credit for admonishing them that a person who wants to think seriously about the mind-body problem has to pay attention to the brain. But this acknowledgment is not always extended to Pat herself, or to the work she does now. "Although some of Churchland's views have taken root in mainstream philosophy, she is not part of it," Ned Block, a philosopher at New York University, wrote in a review of one of her



NIGHT OF THE LIVING TIP JARS

books. "Unfortunately, Churchland . . . approaches many conceptual issues in the sciences of the mind like the more antiphilosophical of scientists." Although she tried to ignore it, Pat was wounded by this review. But it was true; in some ways she had simply left the field. Although she often talks to scientists, she says she hasn't got around to giving a paper to a philosophy department in five years. These days, she often feels that the philosophical debate over consciousness is more or less a waste of time.

There is one area of traditional philosophy, however, in which Pat still takes an active interest, and that is ethics. She and Paul are the two philosophers in an interdisciplinary group at U.C.S.D. that is trying to drum up funding for research into the implications of neuroscience for ethics and the law.

"I think the more we know about these things, the more we'll be able to make reasonable decisions," Pat says. "Suppose someone is a genetic mutant who has a bad upbringing: we know that the probability of his being self-destructively violent goes way, way up above the normal. How do we treat such people? Do we wait until they actually do something horrendous or is some kind of prevention in order? Should all male children be screened for such mutations and the parents informed so that they will be especially responsible with regard to how these children are brought up?"

"Why not?" Paul says. "I guess they could be stigmatized."

"There's a guy at U.S.C. who wanted to know what the activity of the frontal cortex looked like in people on death row, and the amazing result was this huge effect that shows depressed activity in frontal structures. These people have compromised executive function. Now, we don't really know whether it's a cause or an effect—I mean maybe if you're on death row your frontal structure deteriorates. But of course public safety is a paramount concern. We don't want these people running loose even if it's not their own fault that they are the way they are."

"Well, given that they're such a severe danger to the society, we could incarcerate them in some way," Paul says. "We could put a collar on their ankles and track their whereabouts. We could say, We have to put this subdural thing in your skull which will monitor if you're having rage in your amygdala, and we can automatically shut you down with a nice shot of Valium. It's like having somebody who's got the black plague—we do have the right to quarantine people though it's not their fault. Heinlein wrote a story—"

"We're back to Heinlein! How funny."

"This just reminded me. He had wild, libertarian views. The story concerned how you treated people who were convicted by criminal trials. Either you could undergo a psychological readjustment that would fix you or, because you can't force that on people, you could go and live in a community that was something like the size of Arizona, behind walls that were thirty feet high, filled with people like you who had refused the operation. The story was about somebody who chose to go in. What annoyed me about it—and it would annoy you, too, I think—was that Heinlein was plainly on the side of the guy who had refused to have his brain returned to normal. He tells this glorious story about how this guy managed to triumph over all sorts of adverse conditions in this perfectly awful state of nature."

Paul stops to think about this for a moment.

"You and I have a confidence that most people lack," he says to Pat. "We think we can continue to be liberals and still move this forward."

"I'm not so sure," Pat says.

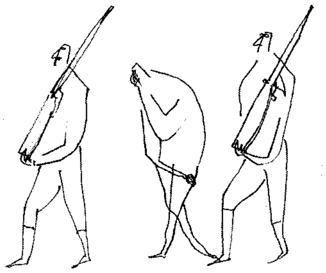
It's been a long time since Paul Churchland read science fiction, but much of his work is focussed far into the future, in territory that is almost completely imaginary. For instance, both he and Pat like to speculate about a day when whole chunks of English, especially the bits that constitute folk psychology, are replaced by scientific words that call a thing by its proper name rather than some outworn metaphor. Surely this will happen, they think, and as people learn to speak differently they will learn to experience differently, and sooner or later even their most private introspections will be affected. Already Paul feels pain differently than he used to: when he cuts himself shaving now he feels not "pain" but something more complicated—first the sharp, superficial A-delta-fibre pain, and then, a couple of seconds later, the sickening, deeper feeling of C-fibre pain that lingers. The new words, far from being reductive or dry, have enhanced his sensations, he feels, as an oenophile's complex vocabulary enhances the taste of wine.

Paul and Pat, realizing that the revolutionary neuroscience they dream of is still in its infancy, are nonetheless already preparing themselves for this future, making the appropriate adjustments in their everyday conversation. One afternoon recently, Paul says, he was home making dinner when Pat burst in the door, having come straight from a frustrating faculty meeting. "She said, 'Paul, don't speak to me, my serotonin levels have hit bottom, my brain is awash in glucocorticoids, my blood vessels are full of adrenaline, and if it weren't for my endogenous opiates I'd have driven the car into a tree on the way home. My dopamine levels need lifting. Pour me a Chardonnay, and I'll be down in a minute.' " Paul and Pat have noticed that it is not just they who talk this way—their students now talk of psychopharmacology as comfortably as of food.

When their children, Mark and Anne, were very young, Pat and Paul imagined raising them according to their principles: the children would grow up understanding the world as scientists understood it, they vowed, and would speak a language very different from that spoken by children in the past. Paul told them bedtime stories about boys and girls escaping from danger by using science to solve problems. He took them outside at night and showed them how, if they tilted their heads to just the right angle, so that they saw the ecliptic plane of the planets as horizontal, they could actually see the planets and the earth as Copernicus described them, and feel, he told them, "at home in the solar system for the first time." Then, one evening when Mark was three or four, he and Paul were sitting by the fire—they had a fire every night in Winnipeg in the winter—and Paul was teaching him to look at the flames like a physicist. He told him how the different colors in the fire indicated different temperatures, and how the wood turned into flame and what that meant about the conversion of energy. The boy was fascinated; but then it occurred to Paul that if he were to sit in front of a fire with a friend his age they would barely be able to talk to each other. He suddenly worried that he and Pat were cutting their children off from the world that they belonged to. Better to wait until the world had changed, he thought.

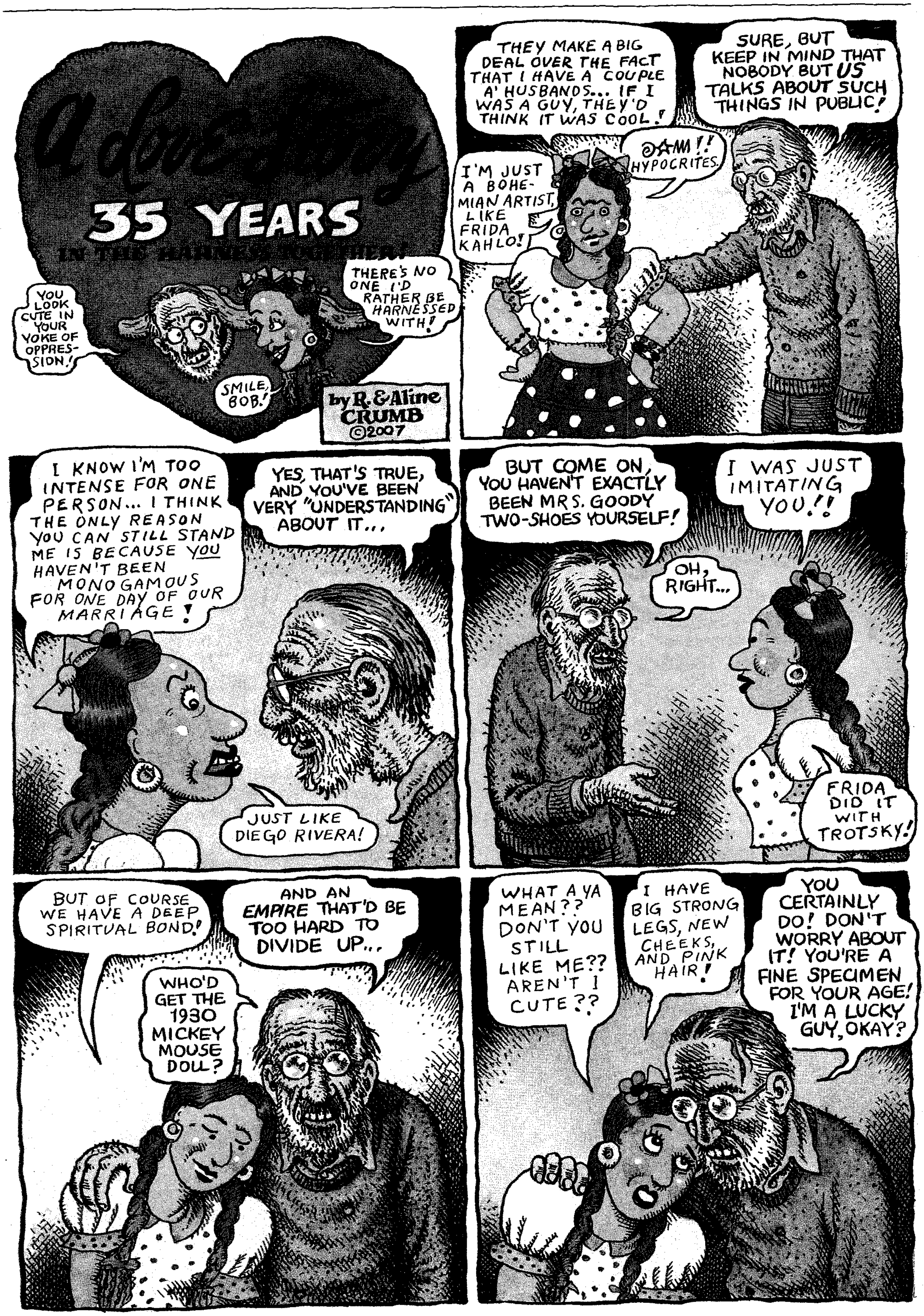
Neither Pat nor Paul feels much nostalgia for the old words, or the words that will soon be old. They appreciate language as an extraordinary tool, probably the most extraordinary tool ever developed. But in the grand evolutionary scheme of things, in which humans are just one animal among many, and not always the most successful one, language looks like quite a minor phenomenon, they feel. Animals don't have language, but they are conscious of their surroundings and, sometimes, of themselves. Pat and Paul emphatically reject the idea that language and thought are, deeply, one: that the language we now use reflects thought's innate structure; that thought can take only the form in which we humans now know it; that there could be no thought without language. Moreover, the new is the new! It is so exciting to think about revolutions in science leading to revolutions in thought, and even in what seems, to the uninitiated, to be "raw feeling," that, by comparison, old words and old sentiments seem dull indeed.

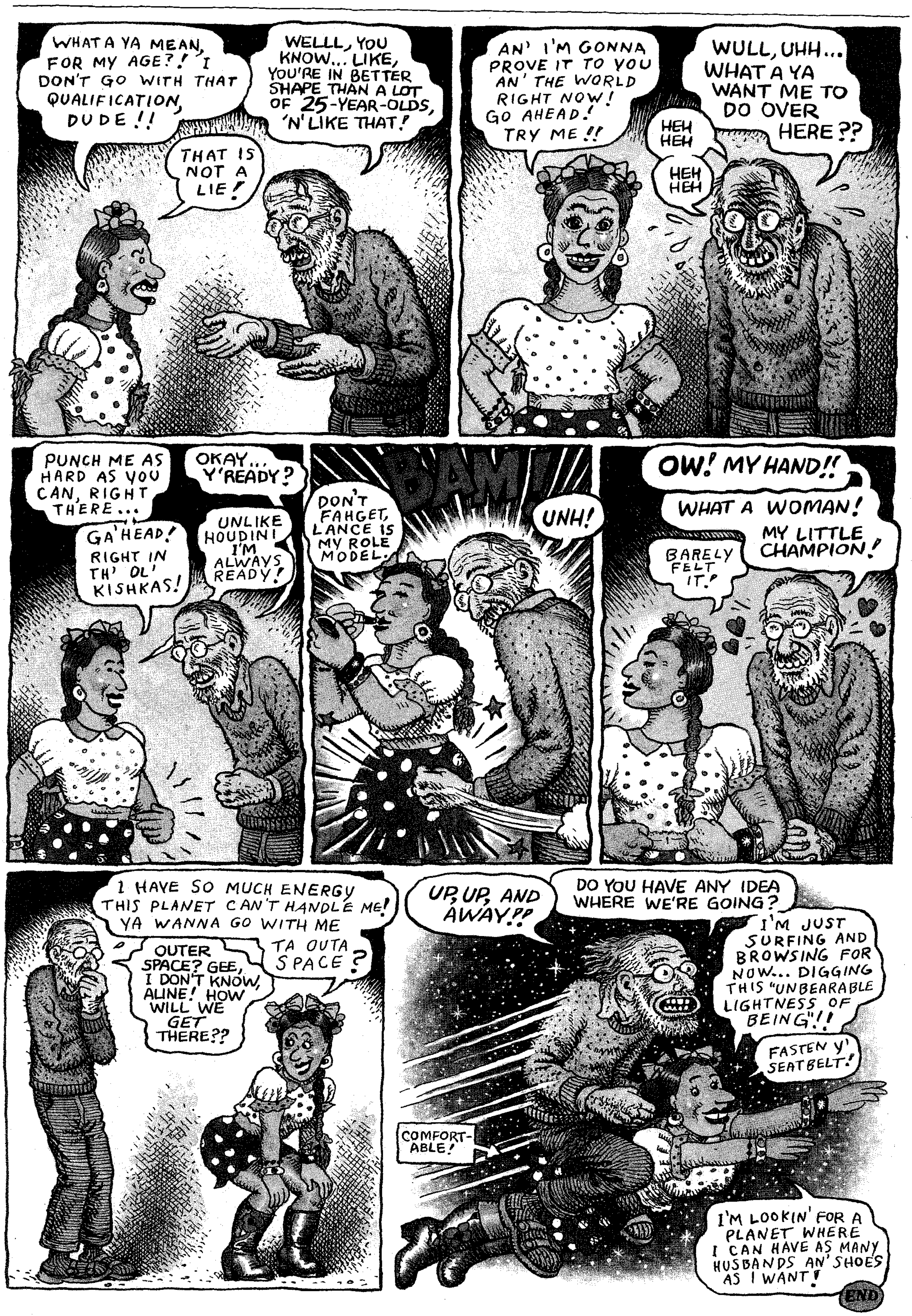
In recent years, Paul has spent much of his time simulating neural networks on a computer in an attempt to figure out what the structure of cognition might be, if it isn't language. Linguistic theories of how people think have always seemed to him psychologically unrealistic—requiring far too sophisticated a capacity for logical inference, for one thing, and taking far too long, applying general rules to particular cases, step by step. In order to operate at the astonishing speed at which biological creatures actually figure things out, thinking must take place along parallel, rather than serial, paths, he believes, and must be able to take immediate advantage of every little fact or rule of thumb it has gleaned from experience in the past. Thinking must also be distributed widely across the brain, since individual cells continually deteriorate without producing, most of the time, any noticeable effect. It seems to him likely that thinking takes place simultaneously along millions of different neural pathways, each of which was formed by a particular stimulation in the past and which is, in turn, greatly or minutely altered by the new experience of the present. All of these pathways, connecting each neuron to millions of others, form unique patterns that together are the creature's memory. When the creature encounters something new, its brain activates the pattern that the new thing most closely resembles in order to figure out what to do—whether the new thing is a threatening predator or a philosophical concept. Humans being animals, cogitating on the highest level is, Paul believes, just an esoteric form of ordinary perception.



Sometimes Paul likes to imagine a world in which language has disappeared altogether. We know that the two hemispheres of the brain can function separately but communicate silently through the corpus callosum, he reasons. Presumably, it will be possible, someday, for two separate brains to be linked artificially in a similar way and to exchange thoughts infinitely faster and more clearly than they can now through the muddled, custom-clotted, serially processed medium of speech. He already talks about himself and Pat as two hemispheres of the same brain. Who knows, he thinks, maybe in his children's lifetime this sort of talk will not be just a metaphor.

If, someday, two brains could be joined, what would be the result? A two-selved mutant like Joe-Jim, really just a drastic version of Siamese twins, or something subtler, like one brain only more so, the pathways from one set of neurons to another fusing over time into complex and unprecedented arrangements? Would it work only with similar brains, already sympathetic, or, at least, both human? Or might a human someday be joined to an animal, blending together two forms of thinking as well as two heads? If so, a philosopher might after all come to know what it is like to be a bat, although, since bats can't speak, perhaps he would be able only to sense its batness without being able to describe it. ♦

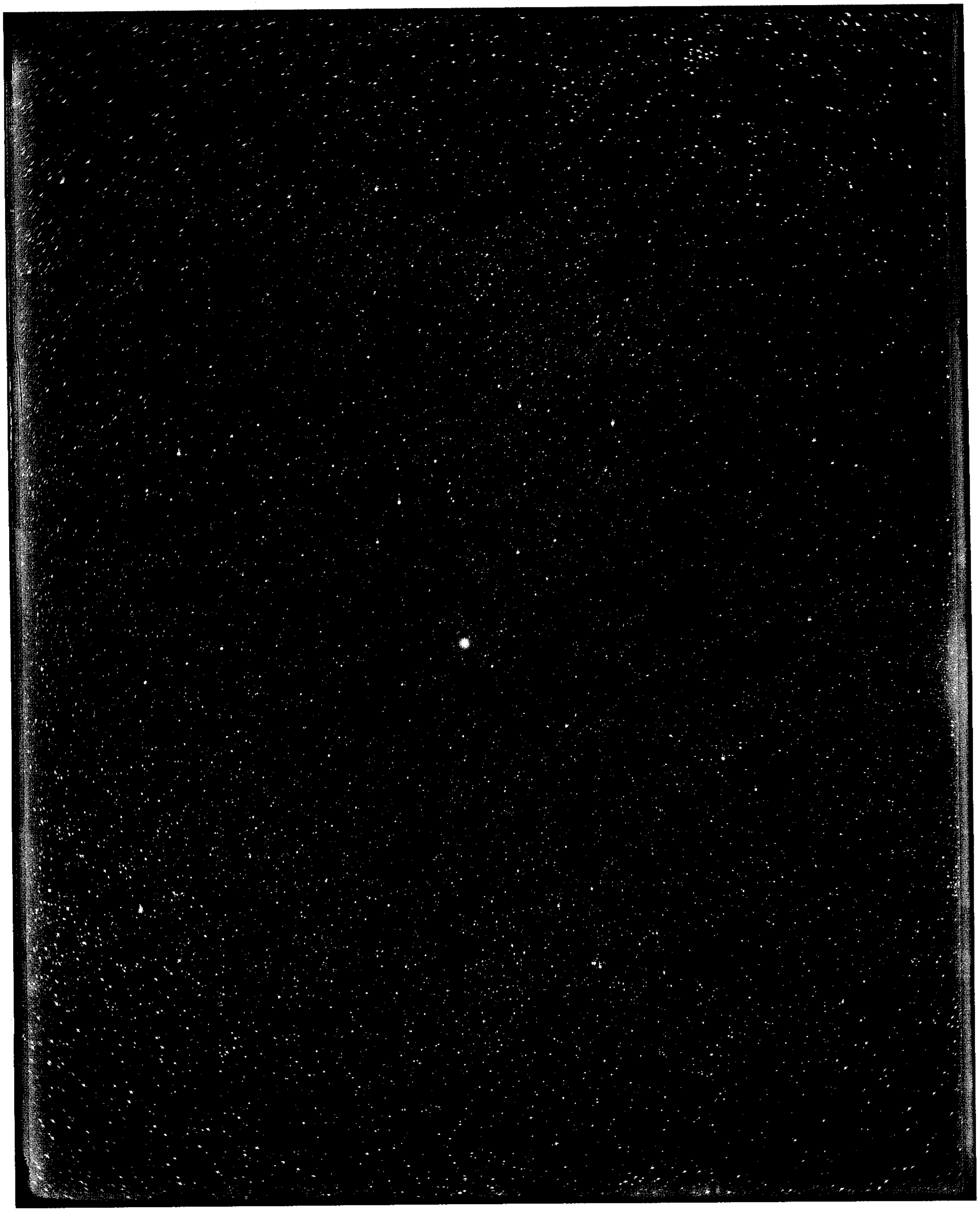

A Love Story
35 YEARS
IN THE HARNESS TOGETHER!
YOU LOOK CUTE IN YOUR YOKE OF OPPRESSION!
THERE'S NO ONE I'D RATHER BE HARNESSED WITH!
SMILE, BOB!
by R. & Aline CRUMB ©2007
THEY MAKE A BIG DEAL OVER THE FACT THAT I HAVE A COUPLE A' HUSBANDS... IF I WAS A GUY, THEY'D THINK IT WAS COOL!
SURE, BUT KEEP IN MIND THAT NOBODY BUT US TALKS ABOUT SUCH THINGS IN PUBLIC!
I'M JUST A BOHEMIAN ARTIST, LIKE FRIDA KAHLO!
DAMN!! HYPOCRITES.
I KNOW I'M TOO INTENSE FOR ONE PERSON... I THINK THE ONLY REASON YOU CAN STILL STAND ME IS BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T BEEN MONOGAMOUS FOR ONE DAY OF OUR MARRIAGE!
YES, THAT'S TRUE, AND YOU'VE BEEN VERY "UNDERSTANDING" ABOUT IT...
JUST LIKE DIEGO RIVERA!
BUT COME ON, YOU HAVEN'T EXACTLY BEEN MRS. GOODY TWO-SHOES YOURSELF!
I WAS JUST IMITATING YOU!!
OH, RIGHT...
FRIDA DID IT WITH TROTSKY!
BUT OF COURSE WE HAVE A DEEP SPIRITUAL BOND!
AND AN EMPIRE THAT'D BE TOO HARD TO DIVIDE UP...
WHO'D GET THE 1930 MICKEY MOUSE DOLL?
WHAT A YA MEAN?? DON'T YOU STILL LIKE ME?? AREN'T I CUTE??
I HAVE BIG STRONG LEGS, NEW CHEEKS, AND PINK HAIR!
YOU CERTAINLY DO! DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT! YOU'RE A FINE SPECIMEN FOR YOUR AGE! I'M A LUCKY GUY, OKAY?


WHAT A YA MEAN, FOR MY AGE?! I DON'T GO WITH THAT QUALIFICATION, DUDE!!
WELLL, YOU KNOW... LIKE, YOU'RE IN BETTER SHAPE THAN A LOT OF 25-YEAR-OLDS, 'N' LIKE THAT!
THAT IS NOT A LIE!
AN' I'M GONNA PROVE IT TO YOU AN' THE WORLD RIGHT NOW! GO AHEAD! TRY ME!!
WULL, UHH... WHAT A YA WANT ME TO DO OVER HERE??
HEH HEH
HEH HEH
PUNCH ME AS HARD AS YOU CAN, RIGHT THERE...
OKAY... Y'READY?
GA'HEAD! RIGHT IN TH' OL' KISHKAS!
UNLIKE HOUDINI I'M ALWAYS READY!
BAM!!
DON'T FAHGET, LANCE IS MY ROLE MODEL.
UNH!
OW! MY HAND!!
WHAT A WOMAN!
MY LITTLE CHAMPION!
BARELY FELT IT!
I HAVE SO MUCH ENERGY THIS PLANET CAN'T HANDLE ME! YA WANNA GO WITH ME TA OUTA SPACE?
OUTER SPACE? GEE, I DON'T KNOW, ALINE! HOW WILL WE GET THERE??
UP, UP, AND AWAY!?!
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHERE WE'RE GOING?
I'M JUST SURFING AND BROWSING FOR NOW... DIGGING THIS "UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING"!!
FASTEN Y' SEATBELT!
COMFORTABLE!
I'M LOOKIN' FOR A PLANET WHERE I CAN HAVE AS MANY HUSBANDS AN' SHOES AS I WANT!
END

FICTION

A TRANQUIL STAR

BY PRIMO LEVI



Once upon a time, somewhere in the universe very far from here, lived a peaceful star, which moved peacefully in the immensity of the sky, surrounded by a crowd of peaceful planets about which we have not a thing to report. This star was very big and very hot, and its weight was enormous: and here a reporter’s difficulties begin. We have written “very far,” “big,” “hot,” “enormous”: Australia is very far, an elephant is big and a house is bigger, this morning I had a hot bath, Everest is enormous. It’s clear that something in our lexicon isn’t working.

If this story must be written, we must have the courage to eliminate all adjectives that tend to excite wonder: they would achieve the opposite effect, of impoverishing the narrative. For a discussion of stars our language is inadequate and seems laughable, as if someone were trying to plow with a feather. It’s a language that was born with us, suitable for describing objects more or less as large and as long-lasting as we are; it has our dimensions, it’s human. It doesn’t go beyond what our senses tell us. Until two or three hundred years ago, small meant the scabies mite; there was nothing smaller, nor, as a result, was there an adjective to describe it. The sea and the sky were big, in fact equally big; fire was hot. Not until the thirteenth century was the need felt to introduce into daily language a term suitable for counting “very” numerous objects, and, with little imagination, “million” was coined. A while later, with even less imagination, “billion” was coined, with no care being taken to give it a precise meaning, since the term today has different values in different countries.

Not even with superlatives does one get very far: how many times as high as a high tower is a very high tower? Nor can we hope for help from disguised superlatives, like “immense,” “colossal,” “extraordinary”: to relate the things that we want to relate here, these adjectives are hopelessly unsuitable, because the star we started from was ten times as big as our sun, and the sun is “many” times as big and heavy as our Earth, whose size so overwhelms our own dimensions that we can represent it only with a violent effort of the imagination. There is, of course, the slim and elegant language of numbers, the alphabet of the powers of ten, but then this would not be a story in the sense in which it wants to be a story; that is, a fable that awakens echoes, and in which each of us can perceive distant reflections of himself and of the human race.

This tranquil star wasn’t supposed to be so tranquil. Maybe it was too big: in the far-off original act in which everything was created, it had received an inheritance too demanding. Or maybe it contained in its heart an imbalance or an infection, as happens to some of us. It’s customary among the stars to quietly burn the hydrogen they are made of, generously giving energy to the void, until they are reduced to a dignified thinness and end their career as modest white dwarfs. The star in question, however, when some billions of years had passed since its birth, and its companions began to rarefy, was not satisfied with its destiny and became restless—to such a point that its restlessness became visible even to those of us who are “very” distant and circumscribed by a “very” brief life.

Of this restlessness Arab and Chinese astronomers were aware. The Europeans, no: the Europeans of that time, which was a time of struggle, were so convinced that the heaven of the stars was immutable, was in fact the paradigm and kingdom of immutability, that they considered it pointless and blasphemous to notice changes. There could be none—by definition there were none. But a diligent Arab observer, equipped only with good eyes, patience, humility, and the love of knowing the works of his God, had realized that this star, to which he was very attached, was not immutable. He had watched the star for thirty years, and had noticed that it oscillated between the fourth and the sixth of the six magnitudes that had been described many centuries earlier by a Greek, who was as diligent as he, and who, like him, thought that observing the stars was a route that would take one far. The Arab felt a little as if it were his star: he wanted to place his mark on it, and in his notes he called it al-Ludra, which in his dialect means “the capricious one.” Al-Ludra oscillated, but not regularly: not like a pendulum; rather, like someone who is at a loss between two choices. It completed its cycle sometimes in one year, sometimes in two, sometimes in five, and it didn’t always stop in its dimming at the sixth magnitude, which is the last visible to the naked eye: at times it disappeared completely. The patient Arab counted seven cycles before he died: his life had been long, but the life of a man is always pitifully brief compared with that of a star, even if the star behaves in such a way as to arouse suspicions about its eternity.

After the death of the Arab, al-Ludra, although provided with a name, did not attract much interest, because the variable stars are so many, and also because, starting in 1750, it was reduced to a speck, barely visible with the best telescopes of the time. But in 1950 (and the message has only now reached us) the illness that must have been gnawing at it from within reached a crisis, and here, for the second time, our story, too, enters a crisis: now it is no longer the adjectives that fail but the facts themselves. We still don’t know much about the convulsive death-resurrection of stars: we know that, fairly often, something flares up in the atomic mechanism of a star’s nucleus and then the star explodes, on a scale not of millions or billions of years but of hours and minutes. We know that these events are among the most cataclysmic that the sky holds; but we understand only—and approximately—the how, not the why. We’ll be satisfied with the how.

An observer who, to his misfortune, found himself on October 19th of 1950, at ten o’clock our time, on one of the silent planets of al-Ludra would have seen, “before his very eyes,” as they say, his gentle sun swell, not a little but “a lot,” and would not have been present at the spectacle for long. Within a quarter of an hour he would have been forced to seek useless shelter against the intolerable heat—and this we can affirm independently of any hypothesis concerning the size and shape of this observer, provided that he was constructed, like us, of molecules and atoms—and in half an hour his testimony, and that of all his fellow-beings, would end. Therefore, to conclude this account we must base it on other testimony, that of our earthly instruments, for which the event, in its intrinsic horror, happened in a “very” diluted form and, besides, was slowed down by the long journey through the realm of light that brought us the news. After an hour, the seas and ice (if there were any) of the no longer silent planet boiled up; after three, its rocks melted and its mountains crumbled into valleys in the form of lava. After ten hours, the entire planet was reduced to vapor, along with all the delicate and subtle works that the

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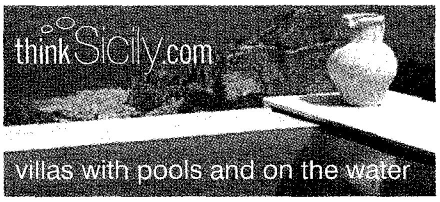

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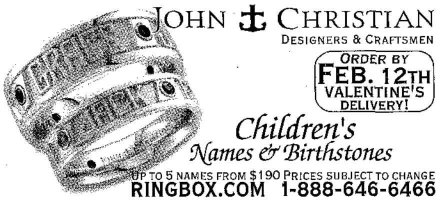

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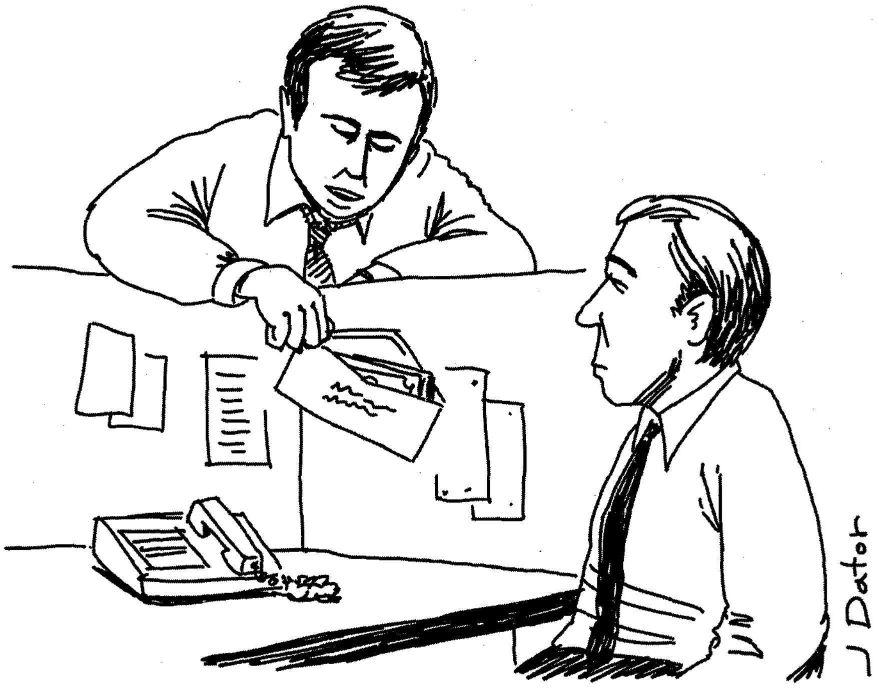
combined labor of chance and necessity, through innumerable trials and errors, had perhaps created there, and along with all the poets and wise men who had perhaps examined that sky, and had wondered what was the value of so many little lights, and had found no answer. That was the answer.

After one of our days, the surface of the star had reached the orbit of its most distant planets, invading their sky and, together with the remains of its tranquillity, spreading in all directions—a billowing wave of energy bearing the modulated news of the catastrophe.

Ramón Escojido was thirty-four and had two charming children. With his wife he had a complex and tense relationship: he was Peruvian and she was of Austrian origin, he solitary, modest, and lazy, she ambitious and eager for social life. But what social life can you dream of if you live in an observatory at an altitude of twenty-nine hundred metres, an hour's flight from the nearest city and four kilometres from an Indian village, dusty in summer and icy in winter? Judith loved and hated her husband, on alternate days, sometimes even in the same instant. She hated his wisdom and his collection of shells; she loved the father of her children, and the man who was under the covers in the morning.

They reached a fragile accord on weekend outings. It was Friday evening, and they were getting ready with noisy delight for the next day's excursion. Judith and the children were busy with the provisions; Ramón went up to the observatory to prepare the photographic plate for the night. In the morning, he struggled to free himself from the children, who overwhelmed him with lighthearted questions: How far was the lake? Would it still be frozen? Had he remembered the rubber raft? He went into the darkroom to develop the plate; he dried it and placed it beside the plate that he had made seven days earlier. He examined both under the microscope: good, they were identical; he could leave in tranquillity. But then he had a scruple and looked more carefully, and realized that there was something new—not a big thing, a barely perceptible spot, but it wasn't there on the old plate. When something like this shows up, ninety-nine times out of a hundred it's a speck of dust (one can't be too clean in the workplace) or a microscopic defect in the emulsion; but there is also the minuscule probability that it's a nova, and one has to make a report, subject to confirmation. Farewell, outing: he would have to retake the photograph on the following two nights. What would he tell Judith and the children? ♦

(*Translated, from the Italian, by Ann Goldstein.*)



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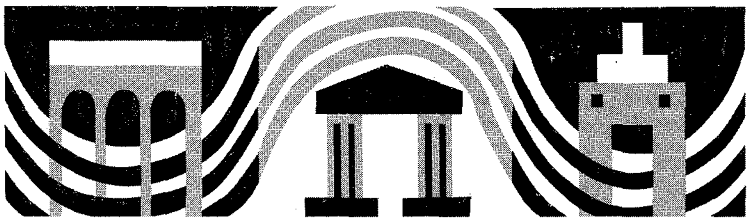


A CRITIC AT LARGE

MISSING LINK

Alfred Russel Wallace, Charles Darwin's neglected double.

BY JONATHAN ROSEN

When he was twenty-four years old, Alfred Russel Wallace, the greatest field biologist of the nineteenth century, had his head examined by a phrenologist who determined that, while his "organ of wonder" was very big, his "organ of veneration," representing respect for authority, was noticeably small. Wallace was so struck with the accuracy of this report that, sixty years later, he mentioned it in his autobiography. It was wonder that drew him to nature, and an instinctive disregard for authority that made it easy to challenge an entire civilization's religious convictions, as he did when, in 1858, he dashed off a paper proposing a theory of evolution by means of natural selection. Unlike Charles Darwin, who spent twenty years keeping a similar conclusion to himself in private dread, Wallace didn't give a damn what people thought. This utter independence from public opinion is one of several reasons that he has all but vanished from popular consciousness.

Another is simple bad luck. Wallace grew up poor and was always an outsider in the gentlemen's club that constituted the scientific world of his day. When, in his youth, he sailed to the Amazon to seek his scientific fortune, his ship caught fire and sank on the way home, taking with it thousands of specimens, a number of live monkeys, and his dream of an easy life. Wallace never found steady work and was instead forced to make a living by his pen—risky for a scientist with a restless imagination in a cautious age—supplementing his income by working as a lowly test examiner. Most unluckily of all, Wallace, having completed his explosive paper on evolution, chose to send it to Darwin himself, who then kicked into high gear and brought out "On the Origin of Species" the following year.

Still another reason for Wallace's obscurity has something to do with that phrenologist. Wallace cracked one of the greatest scientific mysteries of all time but continued to believe throughout his long life that a stranger had read the riddle of his character by feeling the bumps on his head. Phrenology was one of several commitments—like his campaign against vaccination and his credulous defense of spiritualist mediums—that did not endear him to the scientific establishment, or to posterity.

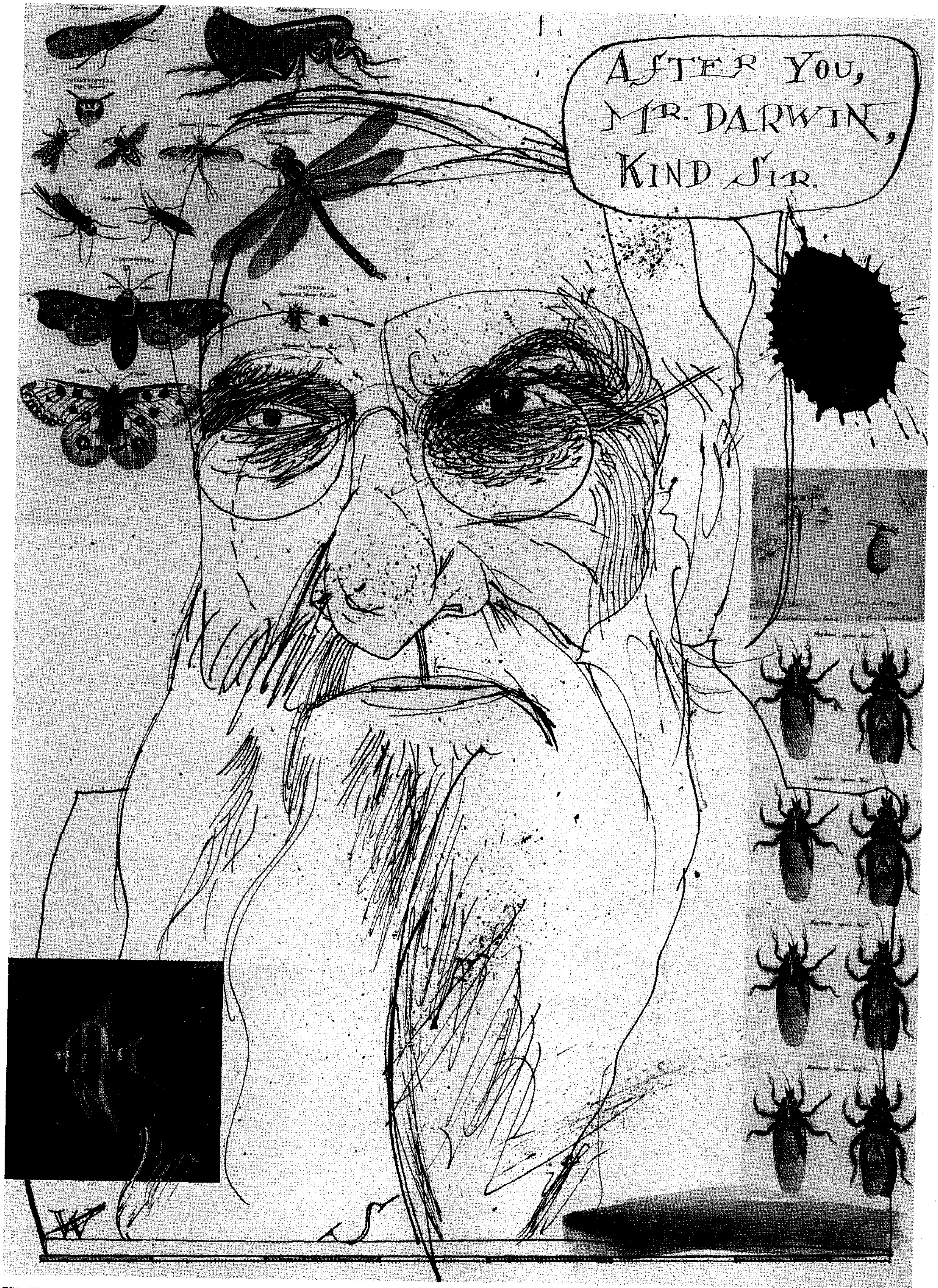
But there are signs that Wallace's time has finally come. Since 2000, at least five biographies have been published: "The Forgotten Naturalist," by John Wilson; "Alfred Russel Wallace: A Life," by Peter Raby; "In Darwin's Shadow," by Michael Shermer; "The Heretic in Darwin's Court," by Ross A. Slotten; and "An Elusive Victorian," by Martin Fichman. In addition, two recent anthologies of Wallace's own writing—"Infinite Tropics: An Alfred Russel Wallace Anthology," edited by Andrew Berry and introduced by Stephen Jay Gould; and "The Alfred Russel Wallace Reader," edited by Jane R. Camerini and introduced by David Quammen—give a sample of his consummate writing style. Joseph Conrad kept Wallace's classic "The Malay Archipelago" on his night table, drawing on it in several of his own books, most notably "Lord Jim."

G. K. Chesterton once remarked that Wallace was one of the world's great men because he led a revolution and then a counter-revolution. Having done as much as anyone to overturn traditional religious assumptions, Wallace proceeded to horrify his fellow-evolutionists by concluding that natural selection could not in itself explain the uniqueness of man. He never renounced his evolutionary theory, but instead made it the cornerstone of a theistic explanation of the universe. No wonder a later scientific generation, newly professionalized, ignored him in favor of his more austere and single-minded colleagues. But the twin impulses in Wallace's work make him compelling and oddly contemporary. He combines both halves of the debate over the meaning of evolution, coolly articulating the materialist mechanisms by which the simplest organisms morphed into human beings while arguing that our existence offers evidence of divine agency. If his name is relatively unknown, his spirit is still making itself felt nearly a hundred and fifty years after his seminal discovery.

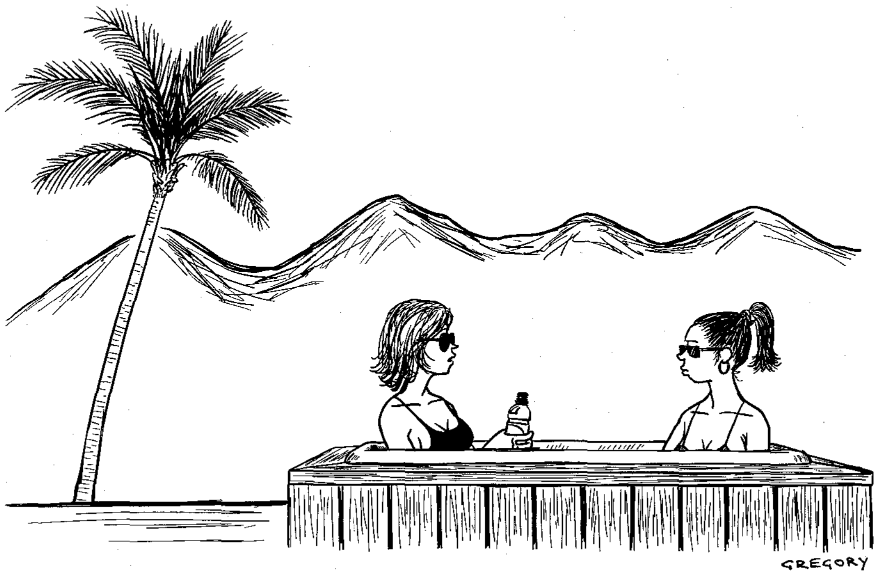
Alfred Russel Wallace was born in Usk, Wales, in 1823, to a once prosperous family that had fallen on hard times. His father was a lawyer who never practiced, and who dabbled in doomed literary ventures and made a series of increasingly disastrous investments. Rural Wales remained an important touchstone for Wallace, who encountered there both natural beauty and the poverty of struggling farmers. His education was spotty, but his father read Shakespeare aloud, along with the Bible, Defoe's "A Journal of the Plague Year," and the travel writings of Mungo Park; by his early teens, Wallace had himself read "Paradise Lost," Dante's "Inferno," and, perhaps prophetically, "Don Quixote."

This reading was his primary patrimony. By the time Wallace was thirteen, the family fortunes had sunk so low that his parents could no longer afford to educate him. He was sent to London to board with a brother who was an apprentice carpenter. At the London Mechanics' Institute, one of several centers of higher learning for the

DAVID HUGHES


AFTER YOU, MR. DARWIN, KIND SIR.

Wallace's turn toward spiritualism hastened an eclipse that had begun when Darwin published "On the Origin of Species."



"I have a deviated septum, so I had to get a boob job."

• •

working class, he heard lectures on Robert Owen, the Welsh social reformer, which turned him against the British class system, just as the pamphlets of Thomas Paine, and his brother's radical views, began turning him against the Church. He was soon packed off again, this time to live with another brother in the countryside north of London, working as an apprentice surveyor, but he took his radical notions with him.

Surveying allowed Wallace to spend his days outdoors, and a new phase of his life began. He discovered geology and botany, purchasing, in 1841, a pamphlet on the structure of plants published by the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge. Soon, his interest spread to beetles. There are three hundred and fifty thousand described species of coleoptera in the world, more than any other order in the animal kingdom; when a later British biologist, J. B. S. Haldane, was pressed by a clergyman on the nature of God, he reportedly said, "He has an inordinate fondness for beetles." British naturalists were certainly fond of them, since they could be found all over England. In a public library, Wallace met a young man named Henry Walter Bates, later to become one of the great Victorian entomologists, who was as passionate about natural history as he was. Before long, the young men were planning a tropical adventure in the manner of Alexander von Humboldt and Darwin, whose "Voyage of the Beagle" had been published in 1839, and had fired a generation of restless young naturalists.

Wallace gave himself a crash course in flora and fauna, making local collecting trips and haunting the British Museum. He also read everything on natural history that he could find, including Robert Chambers's hugely influential book "Vestiges of the Natural History of Creation." This notorious work, published anonymously in 1844, blended science and creationism and argued passionately for "transmutation"—the notion that present life had evolved from previous forms. This was not a new argument—Darwin's grandfather Erasmus had suggested as much two generations earlier; the missing key, which both Darwin and Wallace would supply, was the way that evolution worked. But "Vestiges" helped lay the foundation both for popular acceptance of the concept of evolution and for its ultimate scientific articulation. Though rife with unsubstantiated speculation that put off many established men of science (including Darwin, who also took note of how much calumny could be heaped on a man who ventured unpopular, and unproven, scientific opinions), the book excited Wallace and gave his first trip to the Tropics a purpose beyond the chance to flee a dead-end job and follow in the glamorous footsteps of other scientist-adventurers. Although to the outside world Wallace would remain, for some time, a bug collector for hire, without proper affiliations, his theoretical ambitions were present from the outset. He wrote to Bates, "I should like to take some one family to study thoroughly, principally with a view to the theory of the origin of species."

For Darwin, and for other famous naturalists of the day, like Thomas Huxley and Joseph Hooker, the road to the Tropics generally ran through the finest universities and a post on one of Her Majesty's ships. For Bates and Wallace, who sailed for the Amazon in 1848, the jungle was their Oxford and Cambridge, as well as a source of income. Burgeoning interest in natural history was creating a lively market in reports and samples from the field. Wallace and Bates signed on with an agent, Samuel Stevens, who taught them taxidermy and species preservation, planned their itinerary to accord with the needs of collectors, sent them bottles and cash when they ran out, and advertised their findings in specialized journals, selling their specimens to institutions like the British Museum and Kew Gardens, as well as to wealthy amateurs.

The Amazon was a great apprenticeship for Wallace. He absorbed everything—the fact that certain species that could fly would nonetheless remain on their respective riverbanks, the distribution of plant species separated by hundreds or even thousands of miles. He observed the customs of indigenous inhabitants: how totally naked women could still exhibit modesty; how Indians hunted birds (with curare-tipped darts fired from ten-foot-long blowpipes, a technique that he tried but failed to master). He learned the proper way to eat a live ant, the best defense against vampire bats, and the importance of travelling with fishhooks and mirrors and axes for trade. He developed an intimate acquaintance with malaria, dysentery, torrential rains, and, above all, with the staggering diversity of the rain forest.

But the final lesson came on the way home. Wallace's ship caught fire and sank, and he found himself, after four years in the Amazon, floating in an open boat in the Sargasso Sea, seven hundred miles from shore. He was without friends, having quarrelled with Bates halfway through the expedition. The boat that rescued Wallace almost sank, too, and at some point on the return trip, weak from multiple bouts of fever and contemplating his losses—he had grabbed only a few notebooks, while his entire private collection, including several hundred species new to science, had gone down with the ship—Wallace decided never to travel again.

His resolution was short-lived. After less than two years in England, he was ready to depart again. He was better known this time, and had proved himself both as a collector and as a surveyor. (His map of the Uaupés River remained in use for more than fifty years.) This earned him the backing of the Royal Geographical Society for a trip to the Malay Archipelago, the vast chain of islands that make up present-day Indonesia.

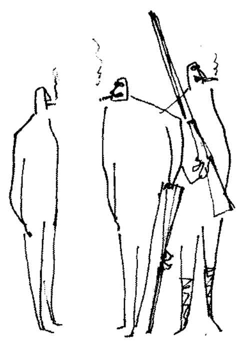
He arrived in Singapore in 1854; he was thirty-one years old and was to remain in the Far East for another eight years, amassing, according to Shermer's biography, an "almost unimaginable 125,660 specimens, including 310 mammals, 100 reptiles, 8,050 birds, 7,500 shells, 13,100 butterflies, 83,200 beetles, and 13,400 other insects, over a thousand of which were new species." The book that Wallace later wrote about this period, "The Malay Archipelago," is rich with the thrill and wonder of the hunt, as when he caught his first specimen of the butterfly *Ornithoptera poseidon:*

> I trembled with excitement as I saw it coming majestically toward me, and could hardly believe I had really succeeded in my stroke till I had taken it out of the net and was gazing, lost in admiration, at the velvet black and brilliant green of its wings, seven inches across, its golden body, and crimson breast. It is true I had seen similar insects in cabinets, at home, but it is quite another thing to capture such one's self—to feel it struggling between one's fingers, and to gaze upon its fresh and living beauty.

But Wallace, unsurpassed as a collector, was also becoming a great conceptualizer. Only a year into his trip, while living under the protection of the "white Rajah of Sarawak"—an eccentric Englishman who ruled a little fiefdom on the northern coast of Borneo and who, Slotten claims, furnished the model for Rudyard Kipling's "The Man Who Would Be King"—Wallace formulated what became known as "the Sarawak Law." His idea, which he published in 1855, approached a full-blown theory of evolution, concluding that "every species has come into existence coincident both in space and time with a pre-existing closely-allied species." Wallace still didn't know how it happened, but he was getting close. The article didn't generate the stir that he had anticipated, but it caught the attention of Charles Lyell, the great geologist whose work was indispensable to both Darwin and Wallace. Lyell was a friend of Darwin's, and after reading Wallace's paper he not only began keeping his own species notebook but urged Darwin to publish something. He recognized that Wallace was closing in.

In early 1858, Wallace, while based on the island of Ternate, where he had gone in search of the elusive birds of paradise, was gripped by a fit of malarial fever. As he recalled in his autobiography, "At the time in question I was suffering from a sharp attack of intermittent fever, and every day during the cold and succeeding hot fits had to lie down for several hours, during which time I had nothing to do but to think over any subjects then particularly interesting me." In Wallace's case, this meant the origin of species.

Wallace recalled waiting for the chills and the fever to subside, his mind throbbing with all the reading he had done, including Malthus's "Essay on the Principle of Population," that dark assessment of the way in which disease and famine keep human populations in check, and Lyell's "Principles of Geology," which emphasized the vast age of the earth and the possibility of tiny incremental changes becoming amplified over aeons.



Swirling around with these theories was Wallace's own experience as a collector, which had given him ample opportunity to note that within each species there were often minute variations, which—in the spans of time that Lyell wrote about, and exposed to the struggles that Malthus described—might become new species if circumstances were favorable. When the fever and shaking subsided, Wallace had it. The fittest variations would survive, the least fit would perish, and new species would thus come into being. During the next two days, he wrote "On the Tendency of Varieties to Depart Indefinitely from the Original Type." He then mailed the paper off to the man most likely to appreciate it.

Darwin had not been especially impressed with Wallace's Sarawak paper; despite Lyell's excitement, Darwin had written "nothing new" in the margin. That was not his reaction when, on June 18, 1858, he received a package from Ternate containing Wallace's new paper. That very day, he wrote to Lyell expressing his shock: "I never saw a more striking coincidence. . . . Even his terms now stand as heads of my chapters." He added despairingly, "So all my originality, whatever it may amount to, will be smashed."

What followed has been called the "Delicate Arrangement." The term, drawn from a phrase used by Huxley's grandson, provides the title of a 1980 book by Arnold C. Brackman arguing that Darwin received Wallace's paper earlier than he acknowledged, incorporated aspects of it into his own work, and then sent it on to Lyell pretending that it had just arrived. Much poring over postmarks and manuscripts is involved in this argument, but the recent biographies all make it pretty clear that, at its root, this was primarily an instance—perhaps the greatest—of great minds thinking alike. But there's no question that Hooker and Lyell—Darwin's friends, both of whom were powerful and wellborn members of the Royal Society—took action to protect Darwin's "priority." And although Darwin wrote to Lyell that "I would far rather burn my whole book, than that he or any other man should think that I had behaved in a paltry spirit," he turned the matter over to Lyell and Hooker with enough hints to help them resolve things favorably for him. Lyell and Hooker arranged a reading, at a meeting of the Linnean Society, on July 1, 1858, of three items: the first was an unpublished sketch by Darwin written in 1844; the second was a letter he had written to a Harvard biologist in 1857 describing aspects of his theory; the final, making a sort of coda to Darwin, was Wallace's paper.

Wallace, still in the Tropics, did not even know about the meeting—nobody told him until it was all over. When he found out, he expressed the humble satisfaction of a servant invited to eat at the master's table, writing to his mother, "I sent Mr. Darwin an essay on a subject on which he is now writing a great work. He showed it to Dr. Hooker and Sir C. Lyell, who thought so highly of it that they immediately read it before the Linnean Society. This assures me the acquaintance and assistance of these eminent men on my return home." One wonders what he might have written had he known the reason for such speedy publication. But later, when he had divined more of the circumstances, he retained his generosity, adding only that he wished he had been given a chance to proof his article.

Solving the origin of species was all well and good, but Wallace still needed to make a living. He spent four more years in the Malay Archipelago, in part because he could not afford to leave and in part because he did not want to. This was the age when naturalists, armed with only pins and jars and magnifying glasses, were on the cutting edge of the scientific world. However much their findings gave rise to materialism in others, there remained an almost mystical aspect to their love of what we would today call biodiversity—the overwhelming plenitude they found in the rain forest and even in their private gardens when they retired to the English countryside. Throughout his life, Wallace would return to collecting like Antaeus touching the earth; days before his death, at the age of ninety, he was still being wheeled through his garden to look at favorite flowers. Wallace was the kind of man who bottle-fed a baby orangutan for three months after he'd rescued it from a swamp, unconcernedly noting its resemblance to a human infant. He never lost his sense that the natural world contained more than the answers derived from it.

Wallace came home in 1862, escorting two live birds of paradise. (He'd disembarked for two weeks in Malta to collect live cockroaches for them.) Compared with his return from the Amazon, this was a triumphant homecoming. Wallace was now a scientist of stature, and he had earned Darwin's gratitude and respect even before his return. After "On the Origin of Species" came out, Darwin wrote to him, "Most persons would in your position have felt bitter envy and jealousy. How nobly free you seem to be of this common failing of mankind." He added that he had no doubt that Wallace would have written his own definitive book on the subject just as well or better "if you had had my leisure." Wallace made the most of his brief stability, marrying the daughter of a respected botanist, and enjoying his welcome at various scientific societies. But he was never one to settle into an easy pattern. Replicating his early wanderings, he tended to move every few years, constantly seeking new gardens and better views. And, even as he was championing what he self-effacingly took to calling "Mr. Darwin's principle," he was being drawn toward a radically different world.

Wallace's sister Fanny had become a spiritualist while he was in the Tropics, and, partly through her interest, Wallace began attending séances in 1865. Though he was skeptical, looking behind doors and under tables in advance of the proceedings, he quickly fell under the spell of these events, enthusiastically recording what he saw. Fresh flowers materialized on a table. (Wallace duly noted each species.) A spirit hand reached down to touch the keys of an accordion. The name of a deceased brother turned up on a piece of paper that Wallace had hidden.

In 1866, Wallace, never one to keep his opinions to himself, produced a pamphlet, "The Scientific Aspect of the Supernatural," which he sent to his eminent colleagues. In 1869, he published a review of a new edition of Lyell's "Principles." In it, Wallace explained the mechanism of evolution and defended the laws of natural selection that accounted for it, but he also expressed the opinion that "there yet seems to be evidence of a Power which has guided the action of those laws in definite directions and for special ends." This was one of the first public expressions of a mystical turn that Wallace called his "little heresy." Darwin, warned in advance, had written anxiously to Wallace, "I hope you have not murdered too completely your own and my child." Wallace never did abandon natural selection, but later generations came to find him an unfit parent. He did not conform to the pattern of the modern scientist, who, on seeing the evolutionary light, was supposed to shed any illusion about the supernatural. Wallace attempted to reconcile the two, and his reputation suffered accordingly.

It wasn't only spiritualism. In the eighteen-eighties, he campaigned against vaccination, arguing that doctors, as interested parties, should not be the ones to decide the question. On a speaking tour of America, in 1887, alongside talks on "Darwinism," he delivered lectures with such titles as "If a Man Dies, Shall He Live Again?" His answer was an unequivocal yes. When Wallace announced, "We are all of us, in every act and thought, helping to build up a mental and spiritual nature which will be far more complete after the death of the body than it is now," he sounded less like a scientist than like Keats, articulating his belief that the world is a school for the education of souls.

Yet through all this he continued to make serious contributions to science. In the eighteen-sixties, Wallace and Darwin carried on a heated debate about the role of sexual selection, and Wallace has often since been proved correct. In 1876, he published "The Geographical Distribution of Animals," which became a pioneering text in the important field of biogeography. Yet, the same year, he relocated his family because a dead brother had urged it via automatic writing. No wonder posterity was confused.

The generous sweep of the recent batch of biographies makes Wallace's detours far more comprehensible. Wallace's interest in unseen forces was long-standing; he had conducted mesmeric experiments on his students in Leicester and on natives in the Amazon. He attended séances in the name of science as he understood it, a discipline that, in his time, was rapidly becoming more specialized and professionalized. The notion that the spirits of the dead might communicate with the living was, for men like Wallace, something worth looking into—as it was for William James, who sometimes turned up at the same séances.

For nineteenth-century naturalists, the idea of nature still carried divine associations. The minds that conceived of the possibility of evolutionary change were still informed by the religious assumptions that their new science was challenging. This helps account for the fluidity of opinion at the time. Charles Lyell realized that wind and rain might over aeons erode mountains, inspiring Darwin and Wallace to recognize that a single-celled organism might in time become a human being, but whether one saw such transformations as an explanation or as a subtler form of magic remained a matter of opinion; time, more than anything else, is the difference between "On the Origin of Species" and Ovid's "Metamorphoses." Lyell, so important to Wallace and Darwin, could not initially bring himself to accept the evolutionary ideas he had inspired.

It is possible to conceive of the debate over evolution as a literary one. Does the universe have an author? Is natural history a story with a plot, or just a random accumulation of anecdotes? Do things reverberate with a secondary, higher meaning, or are they merely what they are? Even Darwin could not free himself from the entanglements of metaphor. "Natural selection" implies agency, a "selector" that Darwin did not really believe in, which is why Wallace chided him for using the phrase.

Darwin, in his autobiography, noted that, as he grew older, he completely lost the ability to read poetry. He wondered if this was a symptom of mental decline, but it seems symbolic of a change in the fabric of his intellectual life and the larger movement of science away from the confusions of a phrase like "natural selection." The age of metaphor—when science, religion, and poetic imagination were braided together—was passing away. Wallace, meanwhile, read poetry more and more, sprinkling poetic epigraphs through his books. In his autobiography, Wallace, thinking of all the ways in which his setbacks, his poverty, and the loss of his early collections had ultimately led him to his present life, quotes Hamlet: "There's a divinity that shapes our ends, rough-hew them how we will."

In 1889, Wallace read Edward Bellamy's "Looking Backward" and became a socialist. He had long been a vocal critic of England's stratified society; his opposition to compulsory vaccination had grown out of a conviction that the poor could not pay the fines for noncompliance and would wind up in jail, while the rich could shrug them off. ("Liberty," he said, "is in my mind a far greater and more important thing than science.") He became president of the Land Nationalisation Society and wrote that natural selection could never have the beneficial effect on human beings that it might as long as vast social inequalities existed. The "social Darwinism" that was already taking shape was, he felt, just a defense of class privilege.

His political passions, like aspects of his spiritualism, brought him full circle—back to the natives he had encountered in the Amazon and in the Malay Archipelago. Darwin, as Slotten observes, had been appalled by the gap between the "savages" he came across and Western man, whereas Wallace had often been struck by the similarities, and felt an instinctive kinship. Many of his passions—land nationalization, radical equality, even the belief in a spirit world—were built into the native societies he had encountered on his travels. Wallace was capable of suggesting without irony that the head-hunting Dayaks, among whom he had lived in Borneo, were morally superior to his British compatriots.

The generations that came after Wallace, extending into our own, have never known quite what to make of him. He remains today too theistic for the Darwinians and too Darwinian for advocates of intelligent design, with whom it is hard to imagine him having much patience. But his holistic impulses can still be seen in the work of naturalists like E. O. Wilson, who incorporated human nature into his theory of sociobiology (to wide scientific outrage) and who continues to dream of what he calls "consilience." Though Wilson is not a theist, forty per cent of American scientists, when polled, acknowledge a belief in some sort of divine power. And there are scientists, like Francis Collins, the head of the Human Genome Project, who have declared unabashedly that the genetic code is the language of God. Collins seems to intend that statement as more than a metaphor but to be disinclined, unlike Wallace, to attempt a scientific argument proving that it is.

Shermer's book, "In Darwin's Shadow," observes that, when Wallace started out, "the study of nature and theology were two sides of the same coin," and the term "science" had yet to acquire its specialized sense of systematic observation in the natural sciences. Wallace, whose theory played such a crucial part in severing the relationship between science and religion, then devoted himself to the attempt to link them again. In the century since his death, in 1913, the gulf between science and religion has only widened, and later generations of scientists, reaching for useful models, have overlooked him.

Nonetheless, by the end of his long life Wallace had, almost in spite of himself, become enormously famous. Despite trying to turn down an honorary degree from Oxford, membership in the Royal Society, and the Order of Merit (it required a visit to Buckingham Palace and an expensive new suit of clothes that Wallace did not wish to buy), Wallace wound up with just about every honor a great scientist could receive. At his death, he could have been buried in Westminster Abbey, next to Darwin, but his family, knowing his wishes, declined. Instead, they buried him in the local graveyard, which had a better view. ♦

"Thanks, but I can't take any credit for the gruel—it's from a mix."

BOOKS

SLAUGHTERHOUSE

The idealistic origins of total war.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

In "The First Total War: Napoleon's Europe and the Birth of Warfare As We Know It" (Houghton Mifflin; $27), David A. Bell, a professor at Johns Hopkins, tries to restore military history to the center of history. This ambition may come as a surprise to amateur readers, for whom military history is probably already at the center of history. But academics tend to regard it either as old-style history, where seven key battles change everything, or as hobbyist's history, where Tom Clancy types look up from the pages to buy Blue and Gray fighting action figures. Real history is the slow-crawl study of small changes, from clan loyalties to price ratios—gradually shifting tectonic plates that suddenly erupt into visible mountains. We see the peaks, but the movement, not the mountain, is the story.

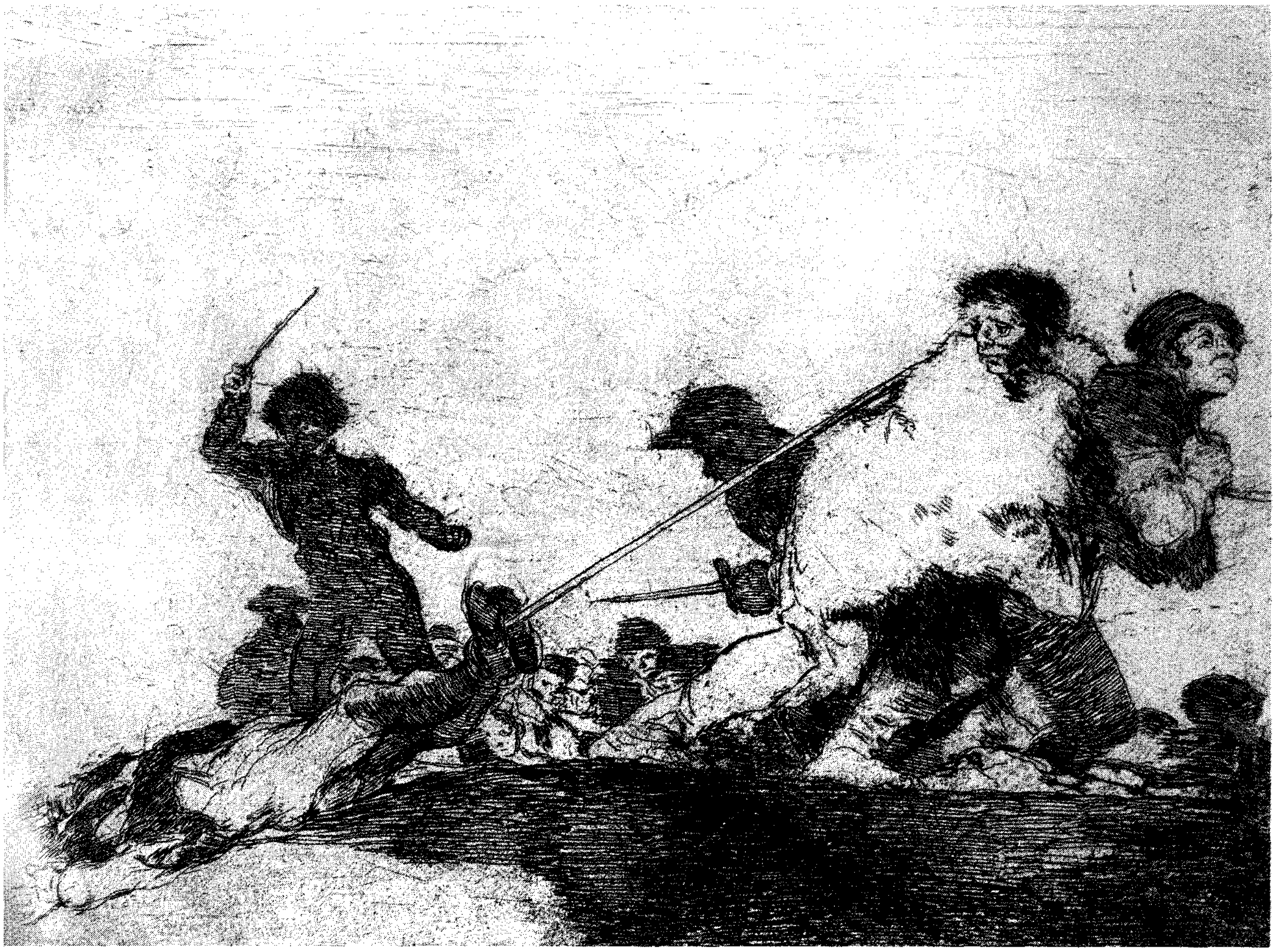
Against this notion, Bell believes that understanding warfare, its practice and its particulars, is necessary to understand modernity—those mountain peaks really are the places that give you the longest view. He wants to make military history respectable by enfolding it into intellectual and cultural history. His subject is Napoleon's wars, and he goes into great and often riveting detail about the tangles of Marengo and Moscow, all offered with a gift for storytelling and a flair for the weird, unfamiliar fact. (The problem that the French Army had in Russia, he points out, was not just the cold but the heat, too. It was ninety-seven degrees when the French arrived in their heavy woollens.) The thesis, though, is what's startling: that the practice of "total war" is a modern and ideological invention, born in the French Enlightenment, and first realized fully by Napoleon—a millennial idea before it was a murderous activity.

The modern practice of total war, Bell argues, was driven by the Enlightenment dream of total peace. Before the modern period, wars were just part of life, like taxes and sickness. Every country fought them and was expected to fight them—they were a necessary sign of aristocratic virtue among the officers who led them—but they were fought largely along established lines, and among soldiers who were, like Renaissance mercenaries, more devoted to the profession than to any cause. Bell draws entertaining pictures of the improbable dandy-warriors of the eighteenth century, from the Duke of Cumberland, who took a hundred and forty-five tons of baggage into battle with him, to the Duc de Richelieu, who helped defeat Cumberland in the battle of Fontenoy, but who was mostly "famous for his primping, using so much perfume that fellow courtiers claimed that they could detect his fragrance on people who had done no more than sit in a chair he had occupied hours earlier."

Into this often bloody but still limited and cautious warfare came, alas, the intellectuals. The French *philosophes* of the Enlightenment began to see war not as one of those things which happen but as one of those things which must be forbidden. ("War, like murder, will one day number among those extraordinary atrocities which revolt and shame nature, and drape opprobrium over the countries and centuries whose annals they sully," the Marquis de Condorcet wrote, while Diderot and d'Alembert's Encyclopédie assured readers that the body politic "is only healthy—that is to say, in its natural state—when it is at peace.") Bell traces the spread of this view that war was unnatural, and that a new era of permanent peace was about to dawn. Of course, once the *philosophes* had dreamed of an end to war, the fact that war hadn't ended could mean only that someone was keeping it from ending. The vexing remnant of the old-fashioned had to be swept away. Through the one-last-time exertions of total war, total peace would arrive at last.

And so, Bell argues—using a reverse spin familiar to all readers of Foucault and company—from the germ of Enlightenment idealism springs modern horror. Instead of limited battles, we have entire nations swept up together in ideological or nationalist crusades: the long line of misery that led to "the war to end all wars," "the decisive ideological struggle of our time," and so on, each designed to use maximum violence to end violence in the world, with predictable results. Wars to end all wars give way to wars that never end. Bell's book details how this grim logic worked out in its original form in Republican and then Imperial France. First, waves of volunteers, often armed only with pikes, came together to defend the Revolution, and then, in a history that stretches from Grande Levée to Grande Armée, the popular mob-armies evolved into Napoleon's conscripted troops. The new-model French Army swept through Europe, country by country, fighting a new kind of warfare, one that depended on rapid movement and, crucially, on the concentrated manpower (and firepower) that those enormous numbers allowed. And so it went. The road to hell was paved with good intentions because the people doing the paving thought they had found a shortcut straight to heaven.

What exactly does Bell mean by "total war"? In some places, he seems to mean a war where everyone killed everyone—where civilian massacre was an expected and enforced aspect. But, as he acknowledges, civilian massacre was a feature of many pre-Enlightenment wars, and, even if Genghis Khan was just doing what Mongols do, the Wars of Religion of the seventeenth century were certainly intended to kill heretics wherever they were found. The St. Bartholomew's Day massacre really was a massacre. It is not so easy to say what, apart from the often discussed technological and organizational advances, from artillery to drill, separates the carnage of La Rochelle from the carnage of Marengo. In many of Bell's total wars, the killing was for the most part limited to the large armies. At one moment, granting this point about the



A new form of regimented carnage, reflected in images like Goya's "The Disasters of War," was meant to produce enduring peace.

GOYA, "HE DESERVED IT," FROM "THE DISASTERS OF WAR" (1810-14)/BRIDGEMAN ART LIBRARY

First World War, he calls it "a distracting exception"; but any theory of total war where the First World War is a distraction sounds like a theory of something other than total war.

Like nearly all definitions, Bell's is really more ostensive than analytic, better achieved by pointing than by phrasing. He means huge armies trying to destroy each other completely, ignorant armies clashing by night until nobody is left at dawn. In the eighteenth century, battles typically were fought, in a more or less prudent and narrow-bore fashion, to take a town or make a point. No one on either the British or the French side seriously thought of occupying France or Britain. By Napoleon's time, while wars might have a strategic goal, they were being fought by mass armies whose goal was to destroy one another. Although the threat of civilian slaughter was ever-present, the real distinguishing feature was the large-scale slaughter *of soldiers by soldiers* in order to achieve an absolutist or "transformative" goal—that is, to make some part of the world the way we want it to be. Bell quotes Clausewitz, writing in 1812, on this point: "Formerly . . . war was waged in the way that a pair of duellists carried out their pedantic struggle. One battled with moderation and consideration, according to the conventional proprieties. . . . The war of the present time is a war of all against all. It is not the King who wars on a king, not an army which wars on an army, but a people which wars on another, and the king and the army are contained in the people."

The most intense parts of Bell's book are devoted to the Peninsular War—the battles in Iberia between 1808 and 1813, where Napoleon's and Wellington's troops first fought each other, even as the locals rose up against French hegemons. In fact, the Peninsula was the original intractable insurgency, which, in turn, shaped the modern model of counter-insurgency, and Bell doesn't hesitate to draw parallels between our time and then: "Spain saw the development of a guerrilla war every bit as destructive as—and eerily similar to—the insurgency now under way in early-twenty-first-century Iraq," he writes. Napoleon's armies had taken Iberia at a time when it was not unlike the Middle East now: a culturally impoverished backwater, once grand but fallen on hard times, with a brutal, decadent ruling class and a fanatic clerical class, sandwiching a handful of liberals who at first welcomed the invading armies and went to work for them. In the beginning, Napoleon's revolutionary army promised Spain reform and even democratic enlightenment. But, in short order, the insurgency grew, until the occupation of Iberia by the French became untenable; we see the nature of the insurgency, and its human consequences for victor and vanquished, in Goya's series of etchings "The Disasters of War."

Given the often horrific nature of the old regime, and the common interest that the people, including the peasants, might have had with the more or less benign new regime, or at least with the promise of modernization, why did they resist so fiercely? Bell argues that the insurgency was fuelled by the extraordinarily tenacious hold of religious culture. It seems to have been not so much religious faith as the whole, enclosing framework of Catholicism, which, whatever its faults, gave order and meaning to the great mass of Spaniards, and which they were not about to surrender. "O happy gothic, barbarian and fanatical Spaniards!" one Spaniard exclaimed. "Happy with our monks and with our Inquisition, which, according to the ideas of the French Enlightenment, has kept us a century behind other nations. Oh, if we could only go back two centuries more!" It was as if, to take the terrible dialectic one step further, the dream of total peace that had produced the fact of total war threw the bleeding and bewildered masses back on the only fixed point left: an absolutist religiosity, made more fanatic by persecution. During the siege of Saragossa, which began in 1808, a miraculous apparition of a palm tree with a crown raised the morale of the entire population. At a time of complete disruption, the Church represented cultural continuity.

The French responded with the usual mixture of bribes and terror: when an attempt to buy off the aristocratic class failed, they were sure that just getting tough enough one last time would do the trick. The French general Dorsenne, Bell writes, "made a policy of hanging the bodies of three guerrillas permanently on gallows outside his office." When one was taken down in protest by the population, another suspected insurgent was immediately hanged to take his place. In an earlier, premonitory insurrection, in Italy, Bell tells us, "imperial officials established heavy-handed 'military commissions' in place of civil courts and gave them the power to mete out death sentences without appeal." In the end, the reformers had to withdraw, in chaos.

A worse consequence, in the long term, was seeded in those years: the French occupation of the German provinces provoked a resistance not religious but more purely national. It was here, Bell argues, that "an enthusiasm for war as a redemptive, regenerative experience, previously found only in the writings of a few intellectuals . . . came to pervade German elite culture." In the poetry of Theodor Körner, in particular, could be found the German romantic idealization of war as "an extreme to be welcomed, an extreme through which individuals and societies alike were tested, proven and steeled." This fantasy had legs. Caspar David Friedrich's great painting of a French soldier lost in a wilderness of fir trees became an image of German nationalism; the old dark firs will sponge up French rationalism completely. In Leni Riefenstahl's "Triumph of the Will," the music that serenades Hitler is written to Körner's poetry. The German romantic reaction to French rationalism was the worst consequence of the Enlightenment—an antibody more harmful than the disease.

Bell sees this apocalyptic and unreal rhetoric as one of the continuing and ever-present enemies of the human spirit, a bad legacy of a bad time. "The vision of war as redemptive continues to flourish," he writes in his conclusion, and "today seems especially strong in the United States. . . . It is difficult to miss the new wave of arguments . . . that American military interventions abroad may not simply be good for the world; they may be good for *us* as well." He is contemptuous of those who still relish the dream of purifying battle, who find warfare glorifying or improving, who welcome our escape from our "holiday from history," or who exult in decisive ideological conflict. In modernity, after all, even those wars that seem necessary and good involve the large-scale massacre of helpless civilians, often by the good guys (as with the Allied bombings of German cities, not to mention Hiroshima). Of course, when wars turn out to be *wars*, as they always do, the enthusiasts are startled, and, with a by now familiar mixture of petulance and pomposity, shrug their shoulders and say it's all too much for anyone to understand, we're all at fault and history must take its toll. Meanwhile, a photograph, right out of Goya, of an Iraqi mother "lying on a bed, arms splayed, the bodies of three young children huddled against her right side"—victims of the Haditha killings—was deemed, by an American newspaper that had supported the war, too disturbing to show its readers.

Bell has a case to make, but at times the academic need to argue causes him to force his argument. It's not just that he has to accommodate the large-scale military massacres that occurred before his period; it's that there are plenty of intervals of "professional" quiet after it. (The officer-class culture of the mid-eighteenth century, after all, was still in place during the mid-nineteenth century, where in England it was responsible for the system of military purchase—that is, idiot aristocrats buying commands—that brought about the Charge of the Light Brigade.) And then Napoleon really was a master of maneuver and strategy, a very old-fashioned warmaker, in his way. Meanwhile, the Duke of Wellington, who actually ended up winning the Napoleonic wars, is, as Bell admits, about as eighteenth-century a figure as you can hope to find; he believed in avoiding battle until the final, decisive moment, and winning with professional soldiers and a motivated officer class.

What would be the alternative view of the history of war in the period? It would, I suppose, be John Keegan's, in his "A History of Warfare," that the mass mobilizations of the Napoleonic era grow out of a unique Western culture of war inherited from the classical Greeks—war fought brutally and to the death in pitched battles. Where Bell sees tectonic plates shifting and sudden upheavals of new mountains, Keegan sees one long wave, which has been ebbing and cresting over the centuries. The wave diminishes over long historical periods, only to rise again when something truly important is at stake. It is perilously easy for a historian to see chasms where there are merely streams, easily leaped over and running to the same common ocean.

One can argue, too, with Bell's history-of-ideas approach to the subject. In a new book, "The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World" (Knopf; $30), the British general Rupert Smith attributes the practice of "total war" directly to a technical innovation: the conscript army. Once the draft exists, he thinks, everything changes, and it was Napoleon's invention of the draft, not any idea present in French philosophy, that changed tactics and warfare. (Smith blandly cites Lincoln as one of the few nineteenth-century post-Napoleonic figures who have understood this brutal truth.) The cultural transformation may matter less than the arithmetic.

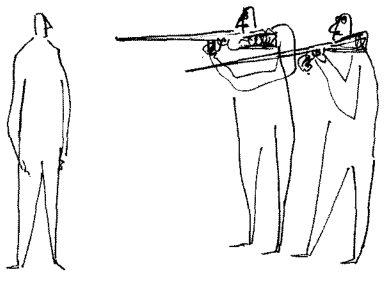
There are obvious causal questions here, of a particularly grim kind: which came first, the crippled chicken or the broken egg? Was conscription, and the mass raising of armies, possible because a new system of thought made it thinkable, or was it seized on by the bloody-minded rulers and then hastily rationalized by their pet philosophers? But technical means and intellectual argument are usually so close in time and sequence as to be interdependent. We can admire eggmen like Bell, while still being connoisseurs of chickens, or, for that matter, think like doves while admiring hawks.

And then, for all Bell's commendable desire to write living history, we may be at the end of the era of total war. Whatever the war in Iraq is, it is not a total war in any of Bell's senses. Launched in a post-conscript age, it can be seen as a return to the historical condition that preceded total war. Ours is a typical piece of colonial closet-cleaning gone badly wrong—a war with limited casualties (for the imperial power), remote operations, and men used as pieces on a chessboard rather than as blood cells in a hemorrhage. Perhaps war makes culture as much as culture makes war, and the farther off the war is the less we notice its effects. If the "war on terror" is fuelled by a romantic rhetoric of war-making as self-betterment for those disgusted by the frivolity of their own culture (though the people doing the dying and the people improving their moral health are somehow never the same ones), it is in practice really more like an eighteenth-century war. And therefore it has a similar kind of cultural afterburn, present but not quite present. One of the things that will surely strike future historians about our era is the odd placidity of American cultural life at the time of a wildly unpopular war—the unexcited alternation of American death and "American Idol," so different from the eruptions that attended Vietnam—that is a result of our not having to go there if we don't have to. This is not exactly comforting. All wars are total to the people they kill. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Zoli, *by Colum McCann (Random House; $24.95).* In the story of Zoli, who is loosely based on the Romany poet Papusza, McCann calls into question easy notions about the inherent value of the written word and the places we call home. Zoli, a Communist, is first betrayed by the Party—which, after initially exalting the Gypsies, burned their wagons and forced them into housing projects—and then cast out by her own people for allowing the *gadže* to publish her work. In a frenzy of remorse, she attempts to destroy her poems and outrun her past. McCann courageously takes on the racism and romance surrounding Romany culture, and yet he never quite manages to penetrate it. Instead, it is his portrayal of twentieth-century deracination that stays with us. As Zoli sets off across Europe on foot, stripped of not only the potency of her Romany heritage but the promise of a utopian future, each new encounter is charged with both futility and wonder.

The Terror, *by Dan Simmons (Little, Brown; $25.99).* Simmons's historical suspense novel depicts the real-life plight of the Franklin expedition, commanded by John Franklin, that set out to discover the Northwest Passage, in 1845, and never returned. In addition to being plagued by cold, scurvy, and food poisoning from stores of canned goods, the expedition, in this account, is stalked by a demonic polar bear. Simmons, an accomplished writer of horror and sci-fi, is predictably adroit in his deployment of terror, but the greatest pleasure of the novel lies in the sharp and sympathetic portrayals of Captain Francis Crozier, who assumes command of the expedition after Franklin's death, and Dr. Harry Goodsir, the mild yet determined ship's physician.



A Long Way Gone, *by Ishmael Beah (Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $22).* In 1993, when the author was twelve, rebel forces attacked his home town, in Sierra Leone, and he was separated from his parents. For months, he straggled through the war-torn countryside, starving and terrified, until he was taken under the wing of a Shakespeare-spouting lieutenant in the government army. Soon, he was being fed amphetamines and trained to shoot an AK-47 ("Ignore the safety pin, they said, it will only slow you down"). Beah's memoir documents his transformation from a child into a hardened, brutally efficient soldier who high-fived his fellow-recruits after they slaughtered their enemies—often boys their own age—and who "felt no pity for anyone." His honesty is exacting, and a testament to the ability of children "to outlive their sufferings, if given a chance."

Wish I Could Be There, *by Allen Shawn (Viking; $24.95).* Shawn, a composer and professor of music, probes the causes of his long struggle with agoraphobia—a fear of certain spaces which makes it difficult to "move forward in the world without knowing already what lies ahead"—in this vividly written combination of memoir and scientific inquiry. Approaching his phobia from Freudian, genetic, and neurological perspectives, Shawn, the son of a former editor of this magazine, analyzes the impact of coping with an autistic twin sister, who was institutionalized at the age of eight. He also lovingly and honestly traces phobic tendencies in his parents, who glossed over their daughter's condition and adopted "an across-the-board policy of secrecy" in front of their remaining children. Shawn is highly attuned to the complexity of phobias' causes and their manifestations, and views his own affliction as in many ways beneficial: "At those moments when we are in the grip of an inner force, perhaps something important is being revealed."

THE ART WORLD

VENETIAN BRASS

Tintoretto's fitful brilliance.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

Tintoretto was too good an artist for his time's uses; he still clamors for a proper role, seeking affirmation, four centuries later. This thought came to me as whimsy, and stayed as conviction, at the Prado, in Madrid, which has just opened the second-ever retrospective (the first was in Venice, in 1937) of Jacopo Comin, who was also known as Robusti, and called Tintoretto, or "Little Dyer," after his father's profession. Tintoretto (1518-94) is the most mercurial of the five undisputed immortals of Venetian painting—the others being Bellini, Giorgione, Titian, and Veronese—and I was eager to see the Prado show, because I have never managed to get a satisfying fix on him. How could someone so great, able to summon the world with a brushstroke, be so inconsistent in style, and, on occasion, so awful? Stupefyingly prolific, Tintoretto garnished the walls, ceilings, altars, exteriors, and even the furniture of Venice, performing commissions for free when that was what it took to edge out a rival. (He was not popular with his fellow-artists.) He brought off one of the world's largest paintings—"Paradise" (1588-92), in the Ducal Palace, which, at seventy-two feet long and twenty-three feet high, is so vast as to be essentially unseeable—and perhaps history's most sustained demonstration of sheer painterly talent, brimming the Scuola Grande di San Rocco, between 1564 and 1588, with pictures whose profusion and intensity burn the most concerted effort of looking to ashes. But he and his populous workshop also perpetrated some of the grimmest daubs—murky and slack—that you ever rushed past with a shudder. I realized, too late, that my puzzlement was a warning. Now I feel that I have acquired a brilliant, neurotic, exhausting friend who enjoins me to undertake on his behalf campaigns that he bungled when their conduct was up to him.

Nothing inferior taxes the eye at the Prado, which augments the cream of Tintorettos in European and American collections with a few loans from Venice, where hundreds of his paintings—including his greatest works, such as "The Miracle of the Slave" (1548)—reside immovably in churches, palaces, and galleries. The show more than overcomes doubts about presuming to assess the artist outside his home town, which he is known to have left just twice, briefly, in his life. The well-restored canvases, shown in good light, sparkle and blaze. Some make plungingly deep space with muscular figures of different sizes; your mind provides perspective that the artist didn't deign to chart. Others array action on intersecting diagonals, along which someone is apt to be arriving from somewhere at terrific speed. (There is an old line that Tintoretto invented the movies; his ways of enkindling routine scenarios, with thrilling visual rhythms that seem to unfurl in time, endorse it.) He drew with his brush, light over dark—so that shadings came first, imparting a sumptuous density to forms that are hit with highlights like spatters of sun. He is supposed to have said that his favorite colors were black and white, but he could be every bit the startling and seductive Venetian colorist when a commission required it. With abject competitive fury, he was not above imitating the grand dragon of the Venice art world, Titian, and his designated successor, Veronese.

"As a matter of fact, he almost never takes the liberty of being himself unless someone builds up his confidence and leaves him alone in an empty room," Jean-Paul Sartre wrote in a 1957 essay, "The Venetian Pariah." For Sartre, Tintoretto is an avatar of existential anguish, who was both behind his time—as the last native-born master on a scene ruled by a cosmopolitan élite—and ahead of it, as the ideal artist for a rising bourgeoisie that was too intimidated by the pomp of the ducal republic to recognize itself in his demotic trashings of aristocratic decorum. Intellectuals of the era, while in awe of

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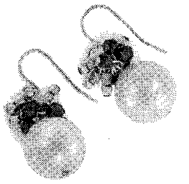
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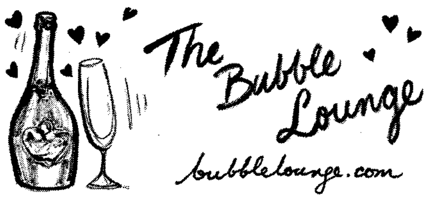

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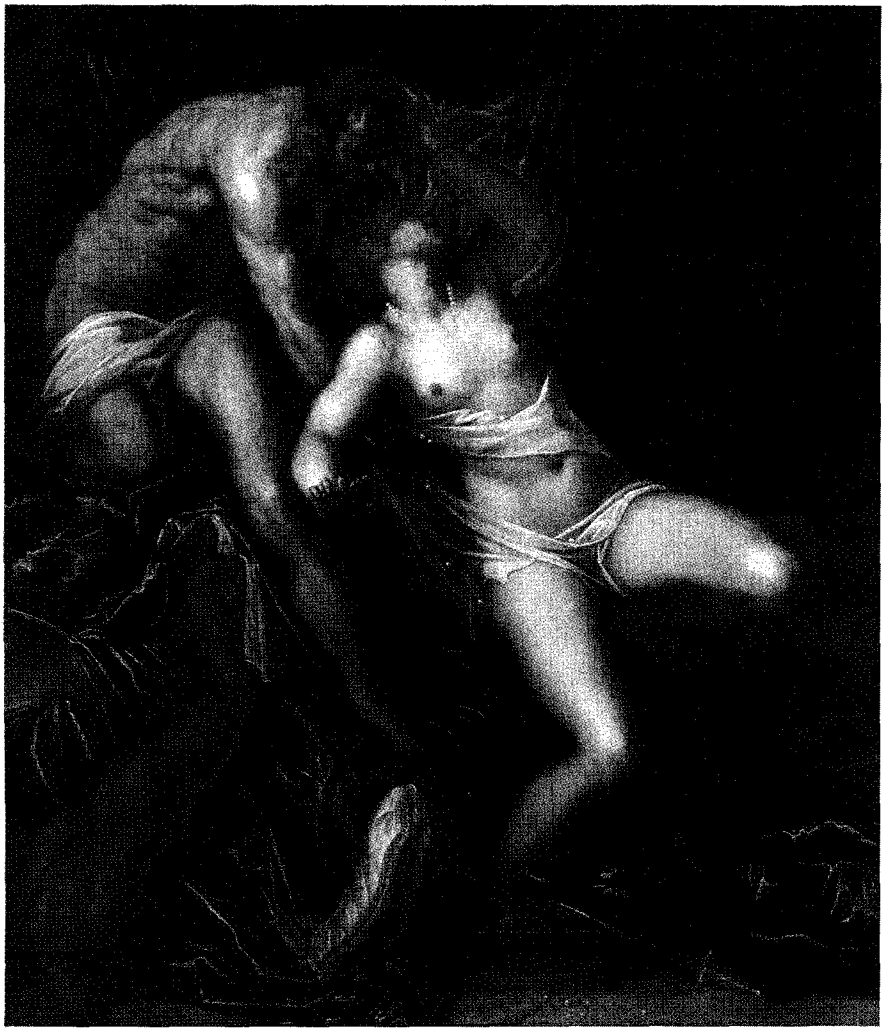
Tintoretto's gifts, scolded him for being too fast, careless, and insolent; when Vasari credited him with "the most extraordinary brain that the art of painting has ever produced," it wasn't meant as unalloyed praise. (Vasari also called him the medium's "worst madcap.")

As a boy, Tintoretto is said to have entered Titian's workshop as an apprentice but was thrown out after a few days, having either frightened the master with his aptitude or irked him with his personality; at any rate, Titian's attitude toward him was plated with permafrost. Little is known of Tintoretto's subsequent training. His earliest surviving work, from the early fifteen-forties, is anti-Titianesque—radically sculptural and draftsmanly, embracing Central Italian influences. Then something happened which the art historian Alexander Nagel compares to the bluesman Robert Johnson's "going down to the crossroads and coming back with scary new powers." "The Miracle of the Slave," made for the Scuola Grande di San Marco, electrified Venice. Its unprecedented range of spatial, chromatic, and kinetic effect suggested a synthesis of "the disegno of Michelangelo and the coloring of Titian"—a contemporaneous formula, often cited, for ultimate greatness in painting. He was roundly hailed, though Pietro Aretino, Titian's literary ally, added a caveat about his lack of "patience in the making." Commissions came in bunches to the new hero, but solid status skittered out of reach.


"Tarquin and Lucretia" (1578-80), from a rare retrospective at the Prado.

COURTESY ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO

He compensated by striving to engulf the town. Meanwhile, Titian refused to slacken his grip on preëminence, let alone die. When he finally expired, at the age of eighty-eight or so, in 1576, it brought Tintoretto no peace. Though he was now, by general consent, Italy's leading painter, he responded with pictures as flailingly ambitious and various as ever. Three from the late fifteen-seventies triumph in as many styles. In "The Rape of Helen," the hauntingly lovely captive languishes in the corner of a churning land-sea battle scene, with scores of figures, ranging in size from huge to tiny, which you can all but hear and smell. In "Tarquin and Lucretia," the naked, lividly fleshy protagonists struggle at the edge of a bed, toppling a sculpture and breaking a necklace that rains pearls. The woman's right hand seems to extend from the canvas, as if to be grasped by a rescuing viewer. (The Baroque, which took hold two decades later, with Caravaggio, can seem an edited ratification of tendencies already developed by Tintoretto.) "The Martyrdom of St. Lawrence" is a sketchy and fierce nightmare of death by roasting, with an anticipatory whiff of Goya. Tintoretto strongly influenced El Greco, blazed trails for Rubens, and fascinated Velázquez, who acquired his paintings for Philip IV.

"What is a Tintoretto?" the art historian Robert Echols asks in the show's catalogue. The answer might be almost anything touched with genius and a strange, thorny, dashing humor. Tintoretto was reported to be a witty man who never smiled. What is his "Susannah and the Elders" (1555-56) if not a grand lark? A luxuriant, glowing nude sits outdoors, surrounded by a glittering still-life of jewelry and implements of beauty, and is ogled by dirty old men (one pokes his bald pate, at ground level, practically out of the canvas) from behind a hedge that forms part of a corridor-like recession into the far background. There are distant little ducks, and the rear end of a stag. But the picture's form is too disorienting to sustain any particular response, including amusement. The backstage space outside the hedge ignores the unity of the central perspective, bespeaking a world that rolls away in all directions, indifferent to pocket realms of mythic anecdote. The effect is stirring and confusing. "Who is Tintoretto's viewer?" strikes me as the really compelling question. No other great artist before modern times, in which shifting contingency affects every enterprise, seems less certain of whom he is addressing, and why. It might as well be you or me as some cinquecento ingrate, and, if we happen to think of people we know who may be interested, the artist encourages us to contact them without delay. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

GUILTY PARTIES

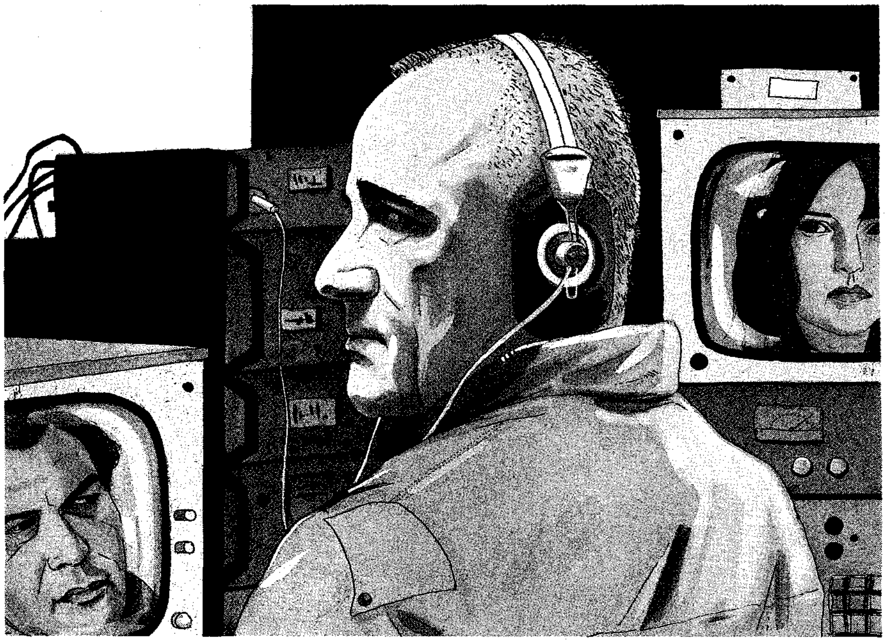
"The Lives of Others."

BY ANTHONY LANE

If there is any justice, this year's Academy Award for best foreign-language film will go to "The Lives of Others," a movie about a world in which there is no justice. It marks the début of the German director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, of whom we have every right to be jealous. First, he is a stripling of thirty-three. Second, his name makes him sound like a lover with a duelling scar on his cheekbone in a nineteenth-century novel. And third, being German, he has an overwhelming subject: the postwar sundering of his country. For us, the idea of freedom, however heartfelt, is doomed to abstraction, waved by politicians as if they were shaking a flag. To Germans, even those of Donnersmarck's generation, freedom is all too concrete, defined by its brute opposite: the gray slabs raised in Berlin to keep free souls at bay.

It is a tribute to the richness of the film that one cannot say for sure who the hero is. The most prominent figure is Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe), yet if you passed him on the street you wouldn't give him a second glance, or even a first. He would spot you, however, and file you away in a drawer at the back of his mind. Wiesler, based in East Berlin, is a captain in the Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, better known as the Stasi—the state security service, which, by the mid-nineteen-eighties, employed more than ninety thousand personnel. In addition, a modest hundred and seventy thousand East Germans became unofficial employees, called upon to snoop and snitch for the honor—or, in practical terms, the survival—of the state. "Love thy neighbor as thyself," Jesus said. The German Democratic Republic offered its own version: watch thy neighbor, then pick up thy phone.

The movie begins, fittingly, in 1984. The Stasi machine still fulfills its Orwellian function, training its sights on anyone who might be construed as seditious. All the more surprising, then, that Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch) should have escaped censure. He is a playwright. He is handsome, affable, and draped in a corduroy suit that must have been made in the West; his live-in girlfriend, Christa-Maria Sieland (Martina Gedeck), is also his leading lady, and supporters of compulsory egalitarianism would consider her beauty an insult. Yet the fact remains that Dreyman is a pet talent of the state—"the only non-subversive writer we have," according to Lieutenant Colonel Grubitz (Ulrich Tukur), Wiesler's cheery superior. As for Sieland, she is, in the words of a government minister, Bruno Hempf (Thomas Thieme), "the loveliest pearl of the G.D.R." He should know, the swine.



Ulrich Mühe as a Stasi agent who spies on a playwright and his actress girlfriend.

LARA TOMLIN

One evening, Wiesler attends the première of a Dreyman play. What is it that alerts him? The curtain call, brimming with a warmth that he, as a Stasi operative, will never feel? The kiss that Christa-Maria exchanges with Dreyman? Or, most wounding of all, their happiness? Whatever the reason, Wiesler decides that Dreyman, precisely because he has neither said nor written anything suspicious, must be a suspect. Kafka would recognize the logic: a man too good to be true cannot be trusted. Wiesler confides his doubts to Grubitz, who passes them on to Hempf; the upshot is that Wiesler is deputed to spy on Dreyman and Sieland—to enter their lives, like a virus, and lay waste to their innocence until it decays into guilt.

He and his team infest the apartment where Dreyman lives. As they emerge from a van, pick locks, and start to seed the rooms with bugs, the musical score—by Gabriel Yared, best known for "The English Patient"—keeps urgent step with their task. This is the director's riskiest move; he expects us to deplore the demolition of human rights, yet he knows that, as filmgoers, we cannot help thrilling to the steeliness of Wiesler's method. (The van is like the one from the TV series "Mission: Impossible.") Anyone can condemn the Stasi's record, and we stoutly deny that we would have caved in to its threats; only movies, or the most supple fiction, can whisper in our ears and urge us to wonder whether we, too, might have fallen prey. The most terrifying moment in "The Lives of Others"—and the terror, again, is fringed with awe—comes as Wiesler, having finished rigging Dreyman's place, crosses to the apartment opposite, knocks on the door, and says to the woman who answers, "One word of this and Masha loses her place at the university." The captain has done his homework.

One of the marvels of Ulrich Mühe's performance—in its seething stillness, its quality not just of self-denial but of self-haunting—is that he never distills Wiesler into a creature purely of his times. You can imagine him, with his close-cropped hair, as a young Lutheran in the wildfire of the early Reformation, or as a lost soul finding a new cause in the Berlin of 1933. See him crouched in a loft above Dreyman's home with a typewriter, a tape deck, and headphones clamped to his skull. Watch the nothingness on his face as he taps out his report on the couple's actions: "Presumably have intercourse." How long can you listen to love being made? Especially when your only love comes from a hooker who marches in, performs, then leaves before you have even refastened your pants? Slowly, the tables turn. Wiesler steals Dreyman's copy of Brecht and takes it home to read; he starts to omit details in his official account; and, for some fathomless reason—guilt, curiosity, longing—he lets the lives of others run their course.

Downstairs, Dreyman finds his own passivity, his tactical playing of the system, beginning to crack. A blacklisted friend hangs himself, and Dreyman feels obliged to write about the terrible suicide rate in the G.D.R. This means smuggling in an untraceable typewriter—more lethal than a gun, in the land of a controlled press—and smuggling out the copy. Dreyman wants not to involve Sieland in this crime, but she is already sunk in sin. Hempf, the government minister, made overtures, and she responded, hoping that it might safeguard her career; there is an unforgettable smear of boredom, repulsion, and self-loathing on her face as she sits in the back of his limousine, after dark, and lets his fumbling trotters do their worst. Wiesler comes to know of this arrangement, and the knowledge both curdles his respect for the Party and grants him a furtive power. We are reminded of "The Conversation," which kept Gene Hackman, king of the listening device, locked in a Wiesler-like solitude. Dazzling though Coppola's film was, it was at some level a fantasy, dreaming of dark conspiracies with which to spice our lives. That is a luxury von Donnersmarck cannot afford, and the paranoia shown within his movie is not a nightmare. It's government policy.

The result is like a clash of puppeteers. Dreyman controls his characters in the theatre, but his strings are pulled by the state. His girlfriend, wanting to be mistress of her fate, is just a mistress, and not for long. ("I never want to see her on a German stage again," Hempf says, after she summons the courage to spurn him.) Wiesler toys with the destinies of his suspects, but he is finally snarled in his own plans and dispatched to a cellar for the rest of his career, there to steam open the mail of ordinary citizens: the hard labor of a Stasi drone. Above them is von Donnersmarck, shifting his fretful players around the city—his horribly convincing re-creation of a repressive world, ranging from the meagreness of Wiesler's lonely dinner (a tube of something red, squeezed onto a bowl of something white) to the unchanging nylon gray of his clothes. "The Lives of Others" was shot in color, but you would barely guess as much, since the landscape has long since shrivelled to black-and-white. I am still shuddering at the scene in the Stasi lunchroom, where Lieutenant Colonel Grubitz overhears a young recruit telling an Erich Honecker joke. (Honecker was then leading the G.D.R.) He demands the punch line, laughs heartily, then asks the joker for his name and rank. The recruit blenches, but, after a pause, Grubitz laughs again—he was just kidding. Years later, we see the same recruit sitting behind Wiesler in the cellar. There was no kidding.

It is a shock to find the action lasting until 1993. As the events of 1984 hastened to a climax, with treachery being punished on a damp street, I was already reaching for my coat. So why press onward? Why drag us into the debris of the broken G.D.R.—into the opening of the Stasi files, and the queasy afterlife of politicians and playwrights alike? Against all odds, though, the best is yet to come: an ending of overwhelming simplicity and force, in which the hopes of the film—as opposed to its fears, which have shivered throughout—come gently to rest. What happens is that a character says, "*Es ist für mich*"—"It's for me." When you see the film, as you must, you will understand why the phrase is like a blessing. To have something bestowed on "me"—not on a tool of the state, not on a scapegoat or a sneak, but on me—is a sign that individual liberties have risen from the dead. You might think that "The Lives of Others" is aimed solely at modern Germans—at all the Wieslers, the Dreymans, and the weeping Christa-Marias. A movie this strong, however, is never parochial, nor is it period drama. *Es ist für uns*. It's for us. ♦

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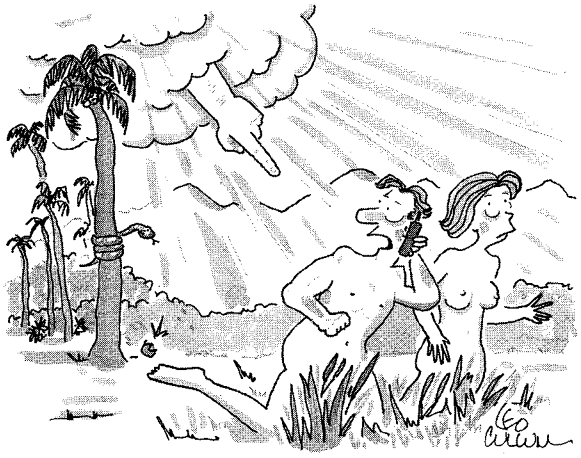
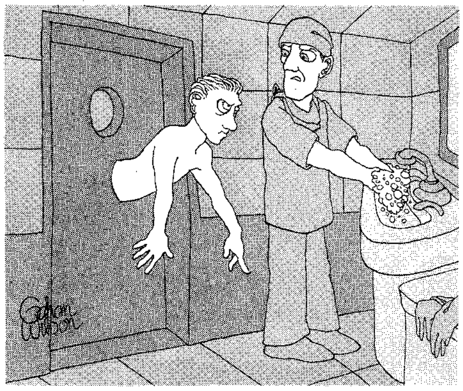
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Tom Cheney, must be received by Sunday, February 11th. Finalists in the January 29th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the March 5th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"Listen, Satan, can I call you back?"
Bezan Madon, Old Bridge, N.J.



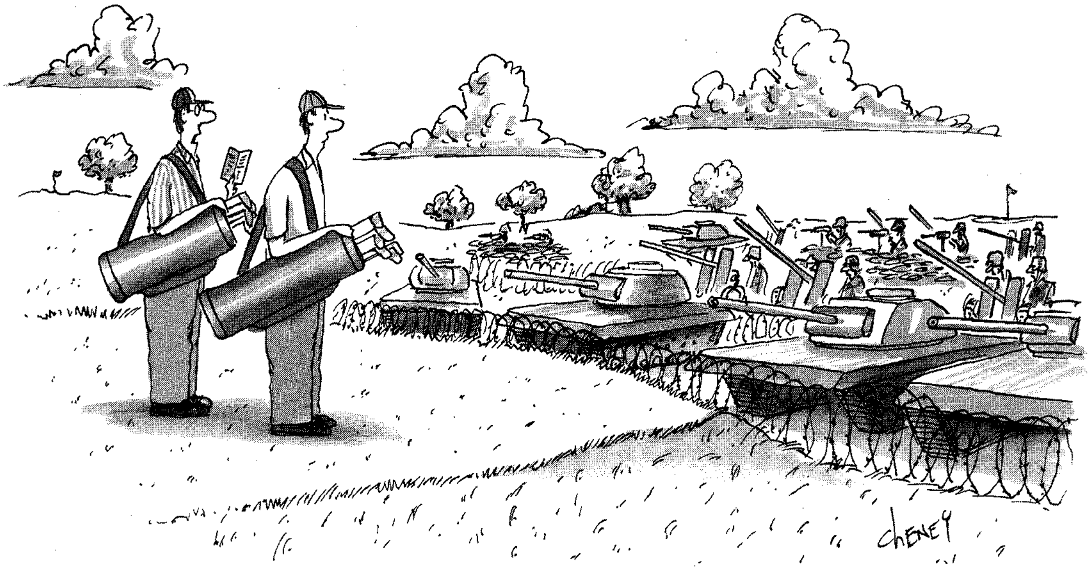
THE FINALISTS

"So sue me."
Daniel Crossen, Los Angeles, Calif.

"So you're telling me I'm washing my hands for nothing?"
John Picinich, Bloomfield, N.J.

"Oh, yeah, like you had so-o-o much to live for."
S. N. Akeman, Eastpoint, Fla.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



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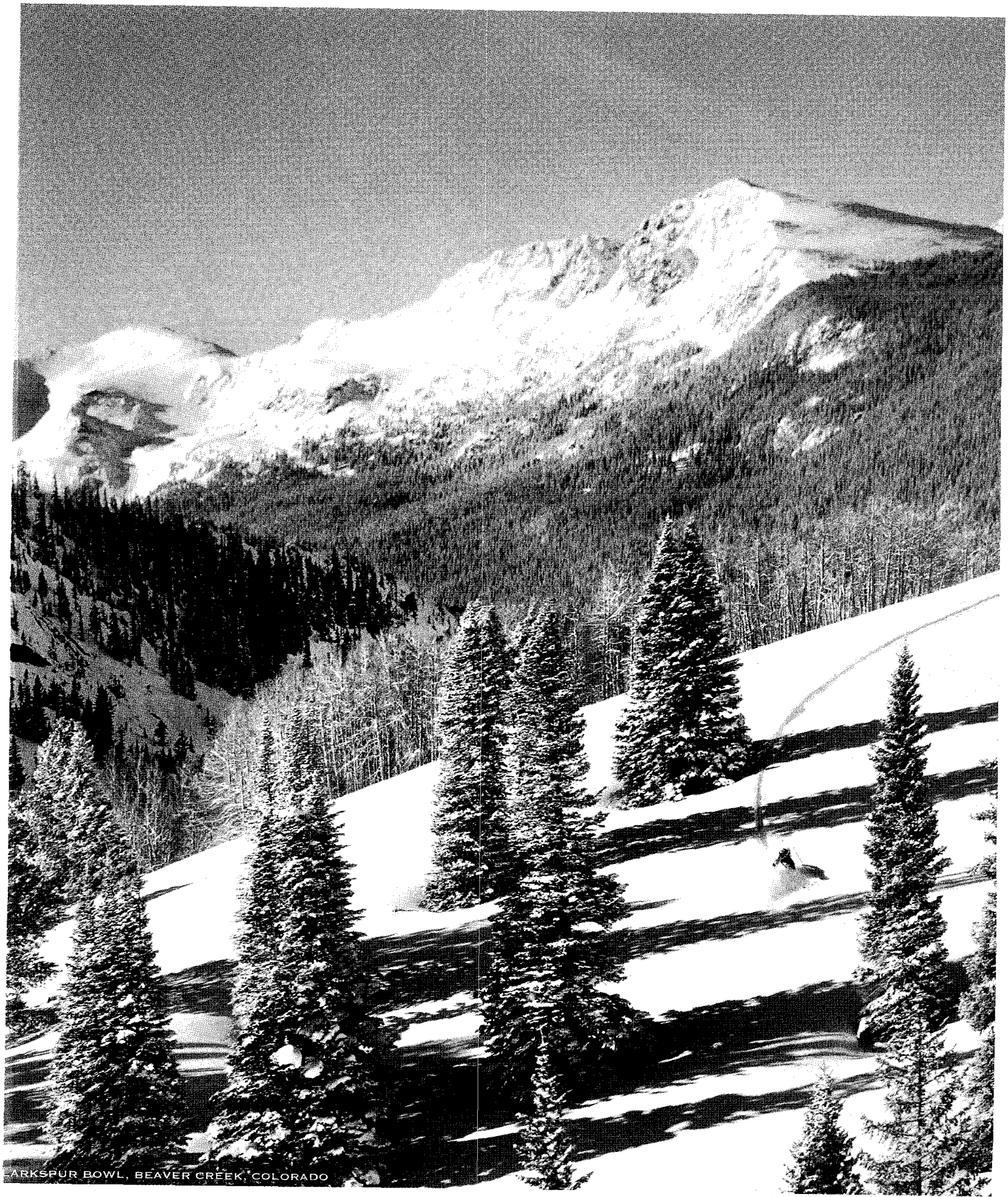
It's LONELY AT THE TOP.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